MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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September 26, 2025 • Vol. 6, Issue 284 • $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

FUR FINDING

Researchers discover a creative new way to study jaguars p10

The 2025 winners of the Gloria Barron Prize

Who was Gloria Barron?

Born in 1913, Gloria Barron (above) was a teacher who spent more than 20 years creating a nature museum where all the exhibits can be touched at the Colorado School for the Blind. Before her death in 2005 at age 92, she encouraged her seven children to try to make a difference in the world.

Youth leadership prizes are awarded

On September 16, the recipients of the 2025 Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes were named. The program recognizes children and teens in the US and Canada who are doing positive things for their communities and the world.

What happened?

A committee of judges selected a group of 25 young leaders between ages 8 and 18 as finalists, then named 15 as winners. Each received a cash prize of $10,000 that they can use to support their service project or help pay for college. The remaining 10 people were named as runners-up, and they received recognition for their efforts.

What is the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes?

The prize was established by T.A. Barron, an award-winning author of books for children and young adults. He named the prize for his mother, Gloria Barron (see box above). Officials said the finalists "demonstrate heroic character qualities such as courage, compassion, and determination." Since the award was created in 2001, 625 young people from Canada, all 50 US states, and the District of Columbia have received more than $1.5 million in prize money. The winners have then gone on to raise more than $31.8 million for their causes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Since its creation, the Gloria Barron Prize has honored 365 young people for humanitarian projects and 260 for environmental work.

Who are some of the winners?

Many of this year's winners focused on improving their communities and helping others. Aadi Kulkarni, age 17, of New Hampshire, founded TechPals to organize youth volunteers to teach digital skills at libraries, retirement homes, and community centers. Vivian Liu, age 16, of Texas, founded Origami for Good, which has inspired more than 7,000 volunteers to create origami for people in hospitals, children's centers, and other facilities around the world. Matthew Vila, age 16, of Florida, founded Harmony Hugs, a nonprofit that provides free music lessons to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Ethan Hua, age 17, of California, founded H.O.P.E. (Help Our Planet Earth) to collect and redistribute school uniforms in order to reduce waste and save families money. Brothers Vick and William Tan, ages 16 and 14, of Minnesota, co-founded Fish Hut, which supports youth mental health through fishing.

Who are some of the other winners?

Other winners are focused on the environment. Gia Providente, age 8, of New York, is helping to protect endangered diamondback terrapin turtles by making awareness signs for boaters with the slogan "Go Slow, Terrapins Below." Asa Miller, age 18, of New York, started Long Live the Nursery!, an international campaign to help communities in Cuba restore coral reefs. Anisha Dhoot, age 16, of Oregon, is developing computer programs to support farmers and fight climate change. Cynthia Zhang, age 17, of New York, founded Monarchs Matter, which encourages young people to raise, tag, and release monarch butterflies to help protect the species. Srihan Sankepalle, age 15, of Michigan, developed a system that uses chemistry and UV light to remove microplastics from rivers, lakes, and coastlines. Runners-up focused on projects ranging from designing an early tornado detection system to sewing colorful gowns for children in the hospital.

What will happen next?

Winners will receive the cash prize, a plaque, and a certificate, as well as a signed copy of T.A. Barron's book *The Hero's Trail*, which profiles young people doing great things, and a copy of *Dream Big*, a documentary film about several former Barron Prize winners. "It has been so rewarding these past 25 years to shine a spotlight on heroic young people and to encourage others by their actions," Barron said. "I'm deeply inspired by the ways youth continue to make a difference—and we need their example more than ever." A full list of current and past honorees, as well as details about their projects, can be found at barronprize.org.

More school meals in Africa

In several African countries, the number of children receiving school meals from the government has increased by 30% since 2022, according to a report from the World Food Programme (WFP). About 87 million children in countries including Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Chad are now receiving meals.

Across the continent, about 307 million Africans are chronically malnourished due to climate change, conflicts, and high food prices. In the past, many African countries relied heavily on foreign aid from partners like the US, France, and the UK to feed their people. That aid has recently been reduced, however, and African governments have expanded funding instead.

The WFP said it will continue working to help millions of children in lower-income African nations, like Somalia and South Sudan, who still don't have nutritious meals at school. Eric Perdison, a WFP official in Africa, said providing school meals "is more than just giving food to a child. It is also an investment in the family, the community, and ultimately a country's future."

Students in Ethiopia

ROAMING ROBOTS
Since 1997, NASA has put five rovers on Mars: Sojourner, Spirit, Opportunity, Curiosity, and Perseverance.

The Perseverance rover (right) and the spotted rock (above)

Major discovery made on Mars

NASA (the US space agency) has announced that its Perseverance rover has found the most convincing evidence yet of ancient life on Mars. The wheeled robot, which launched in 2020 and landed on Mars in 2021, has been exploring the Jezero Crater, an area scientists believe was covered in water billions of years ago. Perseverance has gathered 30 rock samples and sent back images of them so scientists on Earth can examine them.

In 2024, the rover came upon an arrowhead-shaped rock that was 3.2 feet by 2 feet in size and had colorful spots. Scientists named it Cheyava Falls and determined that the spots contained traces of minerals called vivianite and greigite. On Earth, these minerals are usually formed by chemical reactions involving microbes (tiny life-forms). Joel Hurowitz, who led the research, said that could indicate that the spots on Cheyava Falls were also created by microbes.

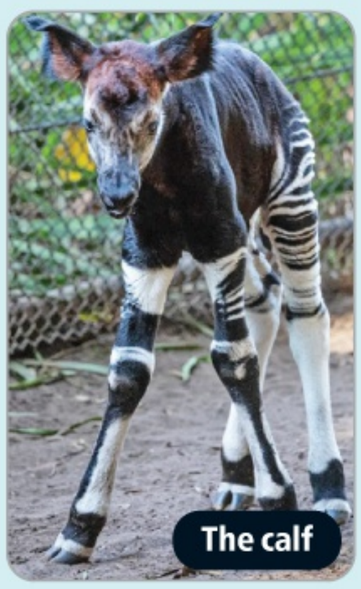
This is the strongest evidence yet that life once existed on Mars, Hurowitz said, but it is not proof because the minerals can also be produced in other ways. For instance, greigite has been created in lab experiments using extremely high temperatures. Yet Cheyava Falls shows no evidence of being exposed to high temperatures.

The only way to confirm the minerals' origin would be to study the rocks in person, but plans to bring them back from Mars are on hold. Still, Hurowitz hopes the findings can one day be confirmed. "It would be amazing to be able to demonstrate conclusively that these features were formed by something that was alive on another planet billions of years ago," he said.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A HAPPY ARRIVAL

For the first time since 2021, an okapi calf was born at the San Diego Zoo in California. Okapis, which are endangered, look similar to zebras but are related to giraffes. Zookeepers said the "spunky" and "precious" baby girl is doing well and plays an important role in the conservation of her species.



The calf

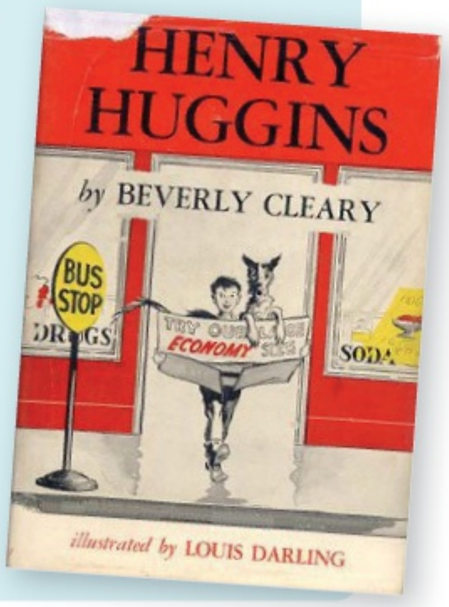
Melinda French Gates

GIVING GENEROUSLY

Melinda French Gates, a philanthropist focused on giving away money to help others, committed $50 million toward a $100 million initiative for research into women's health issues like heart disease and Alzheimer's. "We really can do a lot more...to change women's lives," she said.

A BIG BOOK BIRTHDAY

It's been 75 years since the publication of *Henry Huggins*, the first children's book by celebrated author Beverly Cleary. The popular novel introduced Henry, a third grader with hair that "looked like a scrubbing brush," and his dog, Ribsy, who go on many adventures together. The book has sold more than 3 million copies. Cleary also wrote five more about the pair, as well as a series about Henry's neighbor Ramona Quimby.



ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES; WNBA; COURTESY THE PUBLISHER; ON THIS PAGE: NASA/JPL-CALTECH; NASA/JPL-CALTECH/MSSS; GETTY IMAGES (2); SAN DIEGO ZOO; COURTESY THE PUBLISHER; ON LEFT PAGE: GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES (15); GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES

HIGH DEMAND
About 77% of families in the US report having a hard time finding child care where they live.

Children at a child care center

New Mexico fact file

- **CAPITAL:** Santa Fe
- **POPULATION:** 2.13 million
- **SIZE:** 121,590 square miles
- **GEOGRAPHY:** Borders Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Arizona
- **HISTORY:** Became the 47th US state on January 6, 1912
- **STATE BIRD:** Greater roadrunner
- **STATE FLOWER:** Yucca
- **STATE FLAG:** Shown above

New Mexico to offer free child care

The state of New Mexico is set to become the first in the nation to offer free child care to families of all income levels. Child care refers to care provided while parents are working, before children are old enough to attend school.

What happened?

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, a Democrat, announced that all families in New Mexico will be eligible for free child care starting on November 1. The announcement fulfills a promise made by the governor and the state legislature in 2019. Low-income families have already had access to free child care, and now the program will expand to cover families of all income levels. To meet the increased demand, the state said it plans to license more than 50 new child care centers and about 1,000 homes to serve as smaller child care operations. The program will be paid for in part through taxes collected from oil and gas industries.

Why is this significant?

In polls, a majority of Americans rank finding affordable, quality child care as a major concern. Child care costs the average US family about $13,000 per child per year. Politicians have debated the idea of universal child care for many years, and New Mexico is the first state to enact it. Officials said that about 12,000 more children could be eligible for the program.

How did people react?

"Child care is essential to family stability, workforce participation, and New Mexico's future prosperity," Lujan Grisham said, adding that free care is life-changing because the money saved on child care can go toward other major expenses, like groceries. Other elected officials, including Rebecca Dow, a Republican state lawmaker, argued that removing the income requirement is a mistake and will help upper-income families who don't need it.

What will happen next?

Lujan Grisham has asked the state to provide $120 million in annual funding to cover the costs of the program. The state plans to launch a campaign to recruit more child care providers, and loans will be made available to encourage the opening of new child care centers. Other states and cities could also follow suit.

WORD OF THE WEEK

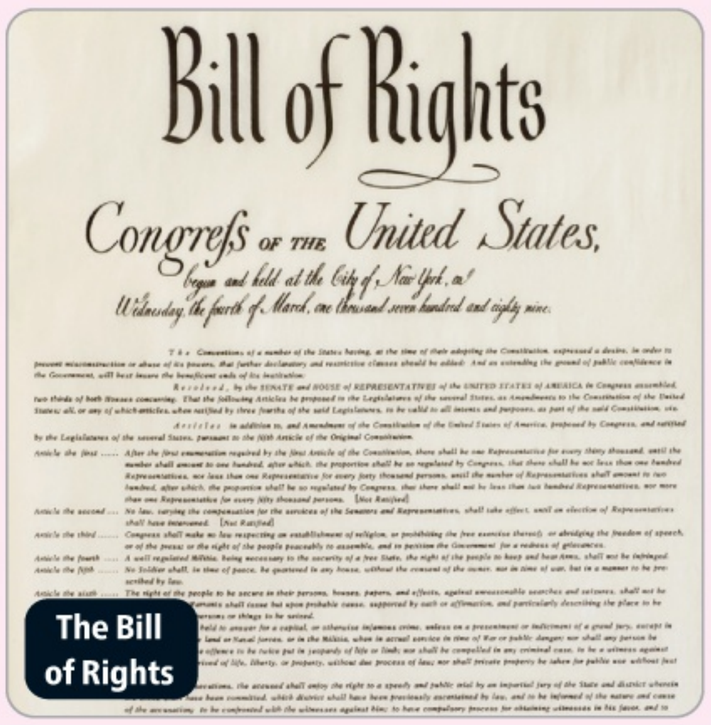
HERO

The story of the word "hero" began more than 2,500 years ago. It originated from ancient Greece, where it described someone who was part god and part human, capable of extraordinary deeds. The word traveled from Greek to Latin, then French, and finally to English. Today's heroes may not have supernatural powers, but they still have courage and strength.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

September 25, 1789
US Congress passes Bill of Rights

On September 25, 1789, Congress (the branch of government that makes laws) approved changes to the Constitution (the highest US law). These amendments, which included the right to free speech, were sent to the states to be ratified. Eventually, the changes were approved by enough states and became known as the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the US Constitution.


Bill of Rights

Congress of the United States,
begun and held at the City of New York, on
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

The Bill of Rights

Nation reacts to activist's death

Charlie Kirk, age 31 and co-founder of the conservative organization Turning Point USA, was assassinated (killed for political reasons) at Utah Valley University on September 10. The shooting suspect was arrested two days later. Kirk's death shocked the nation, and many leaders called for an end to political violence. President Donald Trump said he would award Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Historic award for young actor

At the Primetime Emmy Awards, held in Los Angeles on September 14, Owen Cooper became the youngest person to win for outstanding supporting actor in a limited series or TV movie. Cooper, age 15, starred as a troubled teen in the Netflix series *Adolescence* (rated TV-MA). "If you listen and you focus and you step out of your comfort zone, you can achieve anything in life," he said in his speech.

Happiest states in the US ranked

Hawaii has been named the happiest state by WalletHub, the personal finance company. All 50 states were assessed in 30 categories related to quality of life. Hawaiians have above-average incomes, and 72% said they are active and productive daily. Maryland, with its low unemployment rate, came in second place, followed by Nebraska, where residents reported having the most leisure time.

HALL OF FAMER
A bear named 480 "Otis" has been crowned the winner of Fat Bear Week four times—more than any other bear.

Fat Bear Week set to begin

Katmai National Park in Alaska announced that its 12th annual Fat Bear Week will be held from September 23–30. The event celebrates the park's brown bears that have spent the summer feeding on as much salmon as they can catch, putting on weight for the winter ahead.

Gaining weight is essential for bears before they hibernate (go into a deep sleep) to save energy during the winter. While hibernating, bears do not eat or drink and can lose up to one third of their body weight. As they bulk up beforehand, some bears gain as much as 500 pounds to reach a weight of more than 1,000 pounds. Many of the bears in Katmai fish for their salmon in the Brooks River.

909 "Junior" won the cub contest in 2024.

During Fat Bear Week, which began as Fat Bear Tuesday in 2014, the park's rangers select 12 bears and organize them into tournament-style brackets (a type of chart). The bears are sorted into pairs, and fans can go online throughout the week to vote for the bear they think is the bulkiest in each set. The bears with the most votes move on to the semifinal and final rounds until one bear emerges as the champion. More than 1 million votes were cast by people around the world during last year's contest.

From September 18–19, cubs at the park will compete for the Fat Bear Junior title. The junior winner will then be added to the bracket for the main event. Last year, 909 "Junior"—whose parent 409 "Beadnose" was a previous Fat Bear Week champion—won the cubs' event. The overall winner in 2024 was 128 "Grazer," a 20-year-old female brown bear that also won in 2023.

The Katmai rangers have set up cameras in the park, including one near the Brooks River, so people can watch the animals on a livestream. When *The Week Junior* went to press, the rangers were still deciding which bears would compete. Find out more about the competitors and how to vote at fatbearweek.org.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Custer County offers free corn after truck spill" *9News*

ALAMY (2); FELICIA JIMENEZ/NPS; GETTY IMAGES (3); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4)

Around the world

The new session in progress

The United Nations
Milestone meeting of world leaders

The General Assembly of the United Nations (UN, organization of 193 nations working for peace and cooperation) began its 80th annual session on September 9. The group's newly elected president, Annalena Baerbock of Germany, asked world leaders to unite and address global challenges such as war, poverty, and climate change. Events marking the UN's 80th anniversary were set for September 19 and 22 at its New York City headquarters.

A celebration in Addis Ababa

Ethiopia
New year is observed

Ethiopia has begun celebrating its new year. The country uses a calendar that has 13 months. It is seven years behind the Western calendar, based on different calculations of Jesus' birth date, making this year 2018. Many people celebrate the holiday, Enkutatash, with traditional meals of *doro wat* (chicken stew) and *injera* (flatbread). People also decorate with the yellow *adey abeba* flowers that grow around Addis Ababa, the capital city.

Health workers at a treatment center

Democratic Republic of Congo
Ebola cases increase

An outbreak of Ebola, a dangerous disease, is occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the first time in three years. Cases in Kasaï province rose from 28 to 68 in a week, and at least 16 people have died. About 400 doses of vaccines (medicine that prevents an illness) have been given, and officials have restricted people's movement in the area to limit the spread of the disease.

Spain
Children learn survival skills

Spain is making disaster training mandatory for schoolchildren as climate change increases extreme weather. Starting this year, more than 8 million students will learn how to react to floods, fires, and earthquakes, as well as how to identify reliable information during emergencies. Older students will practice safety techniques.

An emergency worker

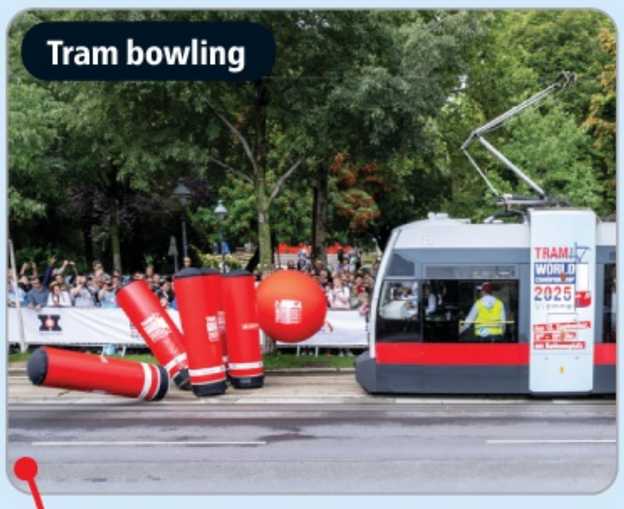
South Africa
Law overturned

Husbands can now take their wives' last names—or both spouses can combine their names—after South Africa's highest court ruled against an old law. In many African cultures, women have traditionally kept their birth names after marriage, but once Europeans took over South Africa in the 17th century, women were encouraged to take their husband's last name. The court said allowing women but not men to take their spouse's name was discrimination.

Both spouses can now change their names.

GETTY IMAGES (7); WOODSIDE; ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK

Around the world



Vienna, Austria
Tram championship held

Winners were crowned in the first-ever World Tram Driver Championship, which celebrated 160 years since trams (vehicles that run on tracks) were introduced in Vienna. Teams from 25 cities competed in eight challenges, including tram bowling with inflatable pins. Vienna won, followed by Poznań, Poland, and Oslo, Norway.

Milos, Greece
Hotel construction stopped

Environmental activists celebrated after authorities halted the construction of a luxury hotel on a famous stretch of coastline. The area is known as "Moon Beach" because it features unusual white rocks that look like the surface of the Moon. Officials blocked the hotel's building permit for failing to meet all the required standards. Activists welcomed the decision but said many similar tourist sites are still planned along Greece's coast.

Japan
Record for people over 100 years old

Japan's health ministry announced that the country now has nearly 100,000 people ages 100 or older, setting a record for the 55th year in a row. Of these 99,763 individuals, 88% are women, including Shigeko Kagawa, who is Japan's oldest living person at age 114. The country's long life expectancy is linked to its citizens' healthy diets and active lifestyles. Each September, the elderly are honored on Respect for the Aged Day.

Brasilia, Brazil
Ex-president guilty

A panel of justices on Brazil's Supreme Court has declared the country's former president, Jair Bolsonaro, guilty of attempting a coup (sudden government takeover) after he lost his reelection campaign in 2022. Bolsonaro is currently under house arrest and could spend up to 27 years and three months in prison following the ruling. He is the first former president in Brazil's history to be convicted for attempting to undermine democracy.

North West Shelf, Australia
Gas project extension approved

The Australian government has extended permission for a controversial gas project to the year 2070. The North West Shelf project brings gas from under the seabed to a processing plant on the coast, close to an area of ancient rock art. Opponents say the gas plant endangers the art and the environment, but the government said it was imposing conditions to protect them.

Is it OK to pull pranks on people?

Clever, harmless practical jokes can be funny, but not everyone likes them.

What you need to know

- A prank is a mischievous act or practical joke that people play on others to be funny.
- A good-natured prank is harmless. It's not mean-spirited and doesn't damage property or belongings, hurt people, or inconvenience them.
- One famous prank happened in London in 1698. People were tricked into visiting the Tower of London to witness the "washing of the lions." The next day, a local newspaper announced that it was a hoax.

FUNNY BUSINESS
Great apes enjoy playfully teasing one another to get a reaction, according to a 2024 study.

There are so many ways for pranksters to catch friends or family members by surprise and crack them up. For a good-natured joke, they can stick googly eyes on fruit or hide a plastic spider or snake in a shoe, drawer, or backpack. Or they can fill an empty milk container with water and stick it back in the refrigerator for someone else to find. But not everyone enjoys being on the receiving end of pranks. Some people think they're upsetting and cause more harm than good. Others say practical jokes aren't actually harmless and could be seen as mean or cruel. What do you think? Is it OK to pull pranks on people?

Yes—everyone needs a laugh

As the saying goes, laughter is the best medicine. That's partly based in science because laughing fills the body with natural feel-good chemicals—like oxytocin, dopamine, and endorphins—that boost the immune system and reduce stress. Light-hearted pranks also create a sense of connection and friendship with someone. When people have shared memories and experiences, like a clever practical joke that made them both laugh, they feel a bond with each other. Besides, the world could use more silliness. Good-natured pranks teach us to laugh at ourselves and not take life too seriously.

No—tricking people isn't funny

One person's harmless prank is someone else's uncomfortable experience. Remember, not everyone has the same sense of humor or thinks practical jokes are funny. Some people don't like surprises, and being on the receiving end of a prank can startle them so much that their heart pounds and they feel anxious. No laugh is worth making someone feel that way. Tricking someone who doesn't like pranks is also a surefire way to break the trust they have in you, which is an important part of any relationship. You can't expect people to relax around you after you pull a prank on them.

YES Three reasons it's OK to pull pranks on people

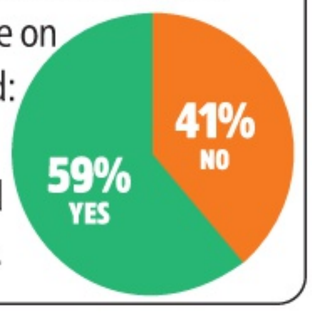
1. Laughter is the best medicine. A lighthearted prank can relieve tension and boost the immune system.
2. Pranks help people to connect with each other and form shared memories.
3. Life should be fun sometimes. Harmless pranks help us laugh at ourselves and give us a break from the everyday.

NO Three reasons it's not OK to pull pranks on people

1. Not everyone shares a similar sense of humor, and some people simply don't find practical jokes funny.
2. Pranks can stress people out and cause them anxiety. It's not OK to upset someone for a quick laugh.
3. When you prank a person, it can affect the level of trust they have in you.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if fruit sandwiches are a good idea. Most of you voted in favor of the fresh take on a classic food: 59% of you said yes, and 41% said no.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think it's OK to pull pranks on people or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Riding major waves

Surfing star Kelia Mehani Gallina is making a mark on her way to the top.

At age 12, Kelia Mehani Gallina recently became the youngest-ever competitor in the World Surf League (WSL). Her historic moment came while surfing the waves she grew up on in the 2025 Lexus Tahiti Pro, one of the WSL's most challenging competitions. It was held in her hometown of Teahupo'o, Tahiti, a French Polynesian island in the Pacific Ocean.

At the Lexus Tahiti Pro

Gallina, now age 13, is of Tahitian and Hawaiian descent. She first got onto a surfboard at age 3 and, thanks to lessons from her dad, was riding Teahupo'o's famously powerful waves less than two years later. She then gained experience in Rising Tides, a WSL program in which professional female surfers mentor young athletes. On social media, Gallina is known as "Miss Teahupo'o"—a nickname given to her by a local fisherman.

To qualify to compete in the Tahiti Pro, she won the trials in July, beating out a field of more experienced surfers. She made her WSL debut on August 8, two days before her 13th birthday. "It's the best birthday present ever," she told *The Guardian*.

Gallina was eventually eliminated from the Pros but not before surfing waves up to 12 feet tall and impressing the surfing world. She also competed alongside some of her Rising Tide mentors, American star Lakey Peterson and Australia's Molly Picklum, who later won the competition.

Looking ahead, Gallina hopes to get another shot at the Tahiti Pro in the near future. She told *The Inertia* her goals are to "keep getting better at surfing, having fun, and getting lots of tubes (waves)."

Kelia Mehani Gallina

SURFING HISTORY
The sport dates back more than 1,000 years to ancient Polynesia, where warriors rode waves to show their strength.

Inspired by the past

Award-winning musician and composer Jon Batiste has released his second album in less than a year. Blending gospel, jazz, blues, and rock, *Big Money* celebrates his Black Southern roots and the history of American music. It follows *Beethoven Blues*, released last November, which reimagined classical music. Touring for that album and playing in historic music cities like Nashville, Tennessee, inspired *Big Money*. He hopes his music sparks deep conversations about the present, all while "dancing along the way," Batiste told CBS.

Jon Batiste

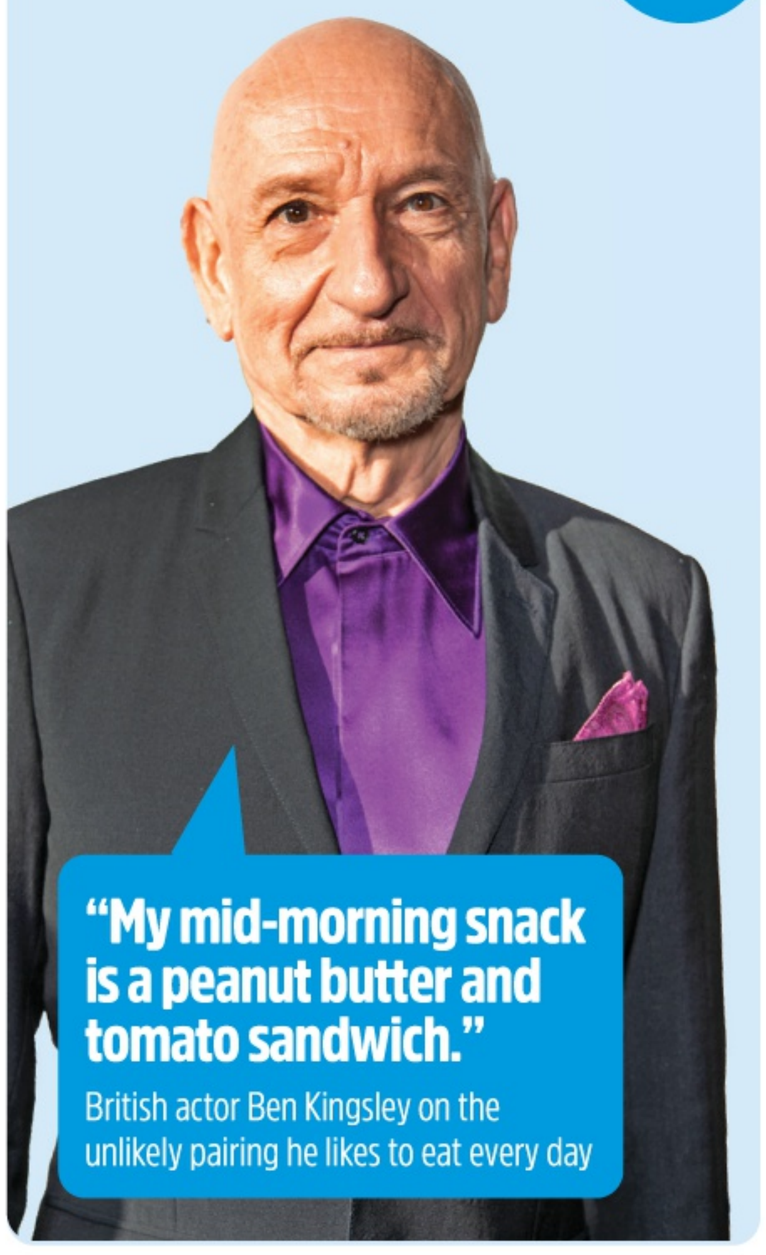
GETTY IMAGES

Bodhana Sivanandan

A champion at chess

Bodhana Sivanandan, a 10-year-old chess player from London, England, is now the youngest female player to beat a grandmaster, the sport's highest rank. Last month, she defeated Peter Wells, age 60, in the final round of the British Chess Championships. Her new title of Woman International Master is the second-highest ranking for women. Sivanandan previously made history as the youngest person to represent England in any sport at the 2024 Chess Olympiad in Hungary. She told BBC News her advice to new players is, "If you lose a game, you should try to learn from it."

OVERHEARD



"My mid-morning snack is a peanut butter and tomato sandwich."
British actor Ben Kingsley on the unlikely pairing he likes to eat every day

FLORAL MARKINGS
Jaguar spots are called "rosettes" because they are shaped like roses.

Jaguars can roar but cannot purr like smaller cats do.

Recovery in Mexico

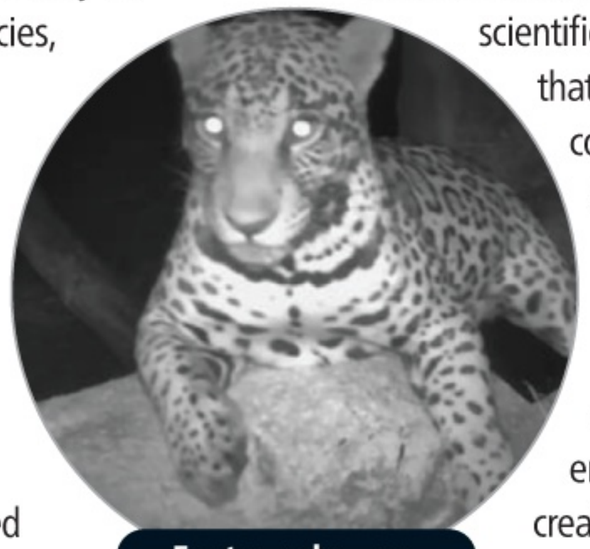
The National Alliance for Jaguar Conservation reports that the jaguar population in Mexico reached 5,326 cats in 2024, a 30% rise since 2010. Experts attribute the increase to the protection of jaguars' habitats, a drop in illegal hunting, and a project that raised awareness about the big cats.

A jaguar in Mexico

A creative way to study jaguars

Jaguars may be large and fierce, but they are still cats. Using knowledge of feline behavior, scientists have figured out a way to safely collect jaguar fur so they can more effectively study the animals. Analyzing hair is a crucial way for researchers to learn about a species, gauge potential threats, and improve conservation.

Jaguars, the largest cats in the Americas, can be up to 6 feet long and weigh between 125 and 250 pounds. About 173,000 jaguars live in the wild, mostly in Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. Jaguars are considered near-threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species, which tracks species' risk of extinction. In Brazil, the big cats often live near cities and farms, putting them at risk from pollution and conflict with humans.



Footage shows a jaguar lying on a mat.

Researchers from the IMPACTO Institute, which works to promote the coexistence of big cats and humans, wanted to collect hair samples for scientific research. They were concerned that pollution from a mining company in central Brazil could affect the health of both people and animals in the area. Analyzing the hair of local jaguars would show whether metals had contaminated the environment and entered the creatures' bodies. But the size and strength of these predators made approaching them too dangerous.

A breakthrough occurred when researcher Paul Raad was riding in a friend's car and noticed her dogs' fur stuck in the floor mats. "We needed mats made of that material," Raad told *BBC Wildlife Magazine*. He knew jaguars would happily touch the mats, leaving their hair behind. "As curious animals, much like domestic cats, they naturally rub against objects," he explained. The team placed mats in areas where jaguars were known to hang out, including trees and dens. They set up cameras to see what would happen over 30 days.

The footage showed jaguars rolling, lounging, and stretching on the mats. Once the big cats left the area, the researchers were able to gather seven samples of about 500 hairs each. They analyzed these hairs to learn more about the cats. Although the team would need more samples to determine whether there was significant contamination in the jaguars' bodies, they said the new method showed promise. "To do science, sometimes all you need is ingenuity and dedication," Raad said.

PLACE OF THE WEEK

Ecola State Park, Oregon

Ecola State Park stretches for nine miles along Oregon's coast and is known for its clifftop views of the Pacific Ocean. The park has an eight-mile segment of the famous Oregon Coast Trail (the OCT), a long-distance hiking route along the state's shoreline. Visitors can hike through spruce forests that lead to views of the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. They might see deer, elk, or a soaring eagle along the way. Sandy beaches have rocky areas for tide pool exploring—perfect for spotting colorful starfish.

A bald eagle

DID YOU KNOW?
In Hawaiian culture, some honeycreepers are seen as representatives of the gods.

A scarlet honeycreeper, also called an ʻiʻiwi

Dropping mosquitoes to save birds

This summer, scientists began dropping mosquitoes over the Hawaiian islands of Maui and Kaua'i. The goal is to save the islands' honeycreeper birds from a disease that threatens their survival.

Mosquitoes are not native to Hawaii but came on ships in the 19th century. Some of the insects carry avian malaria, a disease that can kill birds. Native birds, such as honeycreepers, have been especially vulnerable. Hawaii once had more than 50 species of honeycreepers, but today only 17 are left and most are at risk of extinction.

Using drones, experts are dropping "pods" of non-biting mosquitoes into thickly forested mountains that are hard for humans to reach. The mosquitoes are all male and have been specially bred in a laboratory so they can't produce offspring. Scientists introduced a type of bacteria called Wolbachia into the insects so that when they mate with females, any eggs laid by the females won't hatch. Every week, drones drop 500,000 of these mosquitoes onto each island. This should cause the local mosquito population to slowly decline.

Animal of the week: Shark Bay bandicoot

The number of Shark Bay bandicoots—the tiniest species of its kind—is rising. Two years ago, 66 of the marsupials (mammals that carry their babies in a pouch) were released into Australia's Pilliga State Conservation Area. They are now thriving.

- **LIFESPAN:** 4 years or more
- **HABITAT:** Low-lying shrubs or mounds of grass
- **SIZE:** Up to 8 inches long
- **DIET:** Small animals and plants
- **FUN FACT:** Females' pouches face backward so soil won't get in as they dig with their front paws.

Good week / Bad week

Eels in the UK

South Downs National Park in the UK is adding "eel lanes" to rivers to help European eels migrate. The eels spawn from eggs in the Sargasso Sea and float thousands of miles before returning. Experts created paths around barriers, such as dams.

Gorillas in the DRC

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is selling off 52 areas where companies can dig for oil. These include wild forests and other habitats for endangered lowland gorillas, bonobos, and elephants.

Ask an expert: "Why do dogs love peanut butter?" Logan, 9, Massachusetts

Clive D. L. Wynne
Canine Science Collaboratory director, Arizona State University

Dogs love peanut butter for much the same reason people do—it is packed with fat and a little bit of sugar. It has protein and some dietary fiber, but it is not a good food to let a dog have too much of. Unless your dog is a canine super-athlete, it's best to have it in moderation.

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about Clive D. L. Wynne at clivewynne.com.

ALAMY (2); WESTERN SUSSEX RIVERS TRUST; GETTY IMAGES (2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4); MDPI

Where music tells a

Discover the beauty and history of a famous opera company.

The Metropolitan Opera is a prestigious cultural institution in New York City that is well known throughout North America and the world.

The Metropolitan Opera House

What is the Met?

In an opera, a dramatic or comedic story is told through orchestral music. The Metropolitan Opera Association (known as the Met) will present 19 operas during its season, from September to June. Based in Lincoln Center in New York City, the Met is the largest classical music organization in North America and is known for world-famous performers, lavish scenery, and its grand opera house (see "Inside the opera house" below).

The Met's first home, in 1929

Early beginnings

In the 1800s, the Academy of Music was New York City's premier opera house. Box seats were owned by the city's oldest, most prominent families while newly rich families, including the Vanderbilts, were denied them. This inspired them to build their own opera house. The Metropolitan Opera opened at 39th Street and Broadway in 1883 with French composer Charles Gounod's *Faust*. During the early 20th century, the Met featured opera legends like tenor Enrico Caruso and soprano Rosa Ponselle.

WOW!
The Metropolitan Opera House has 51 trapdoors and seven elevators that help move performers and props during performances.

The 2024 holiday production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Metropolitan Opera

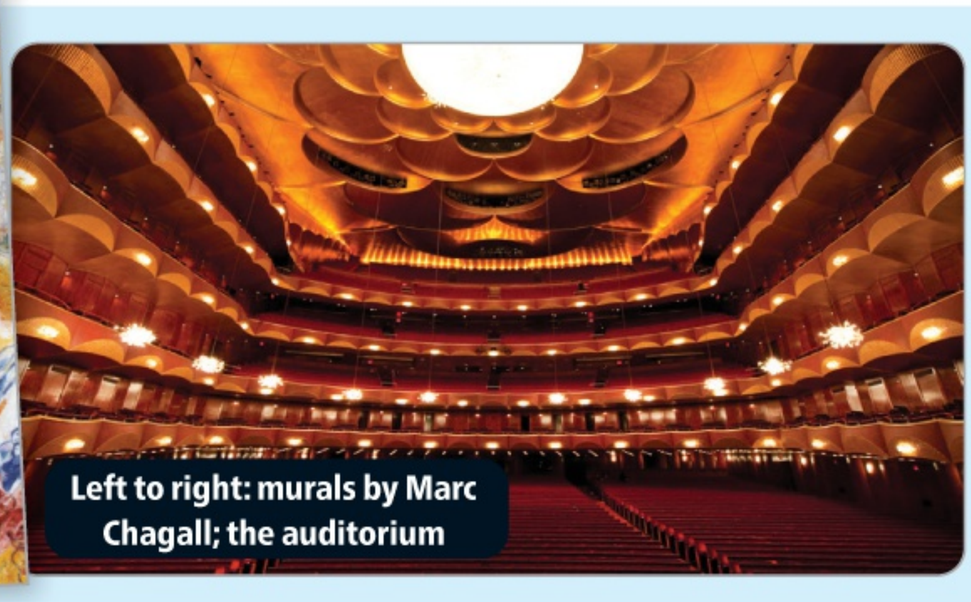
Inside the opera house

The six-level Met Opera House is designed in a horseshoe shape. The grand tier features two murals by the famous artist Marc Chagall. One is titled *The Sources of Music* and shows King David playing the harp. The other, called *The Triumph of Music*, depicts figures celebrating around an angel with a trumpet. The auditorium ceiling was made using more than a million sheets of 23-carat gold, each about one square inch in size. The iconic starburst chandeliers—11 in the lobby and 21 in the auditorium—were a gift to the US from Austria after World War II (1939–1945).

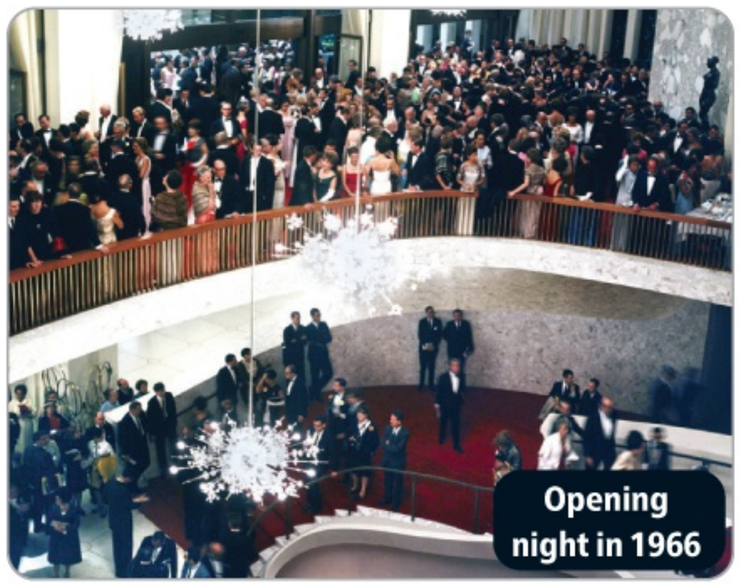
RICHARD TERMINE/METROPOLITAN OPERA; MARTY SOHL/METROPOLITAN OPERA; JONATHAN TICHLER/METROPOLITAN OPERA (2); METROPOLITAN OPERA; SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY IMAGES (3)

All about the Metropolitan Opera

dramatic story



Left to right: murals by Marc Chagall; the auditorium



Opening night in 1966

Becoming a destination

The Met joined other cultural institutions in 1966 to form the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, which meant a move to a bigger, more modern opera house. When it opened on Manhattan's Upper West Side in September 1966, it became the largest opera house in the world by capacity, with space for 3,975 guests. In 1977, the Met began regularly broadcasting some performances on public TV, further increasing its popularity. The first, *La Bohème*, was viewed by more than 4 million people. Nearly all operas at the Met are performed in their original languages, such as Italian and German. A 1995 innovation, Met Titles, provided real-time translations on the back of each seat to enhance accessibility and understanding.

The Children's Chorus in *La Bohème*

The Met today

More than 800,000 people attend the Met each season. Millions more are reached through media distribution, such as the Met Live in HD series, which broadcasts operas in more than 2,000 venues in 73 countries. The Met also offers its streaming service, Met Opera on Demand, which provides access to a library of past performances. The Children's Chorus, an education program at the Met, features young singers who perform in select operas. An annual holiday tradition is an English-language adaptation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which is widely considered to be a good introduction to opera for children and adults because of its storytelling, humor, and recognizable music.

** It is a pair of opera glasses—special binoculars audience members may use to see the stage clearly.*

LAND DWELLER
The earliest known ancestor of modern whales was a mammal that lived on land, near water, about 50 million years ago.

An artist's rendering of Janjucetus dullardi

A cute but fierce prehistoric whale

Scientists in Australia have identified a new species of prehistoric whale that looked adorable but was actually a ferocious predator with a row of razor-like teeth. Named Janjucetus dullardi, it lived 26 million years ago.

The species was identified by a team of paleontologists (scientists who study the past through fossils) from the Museums Victoria Research Institute. It belonged to a family of small whales called mammalodontids, which lived in the warm, shallow waters off Australia and New Zealand during the Oligocene Epoch (33.9 million to 23 million years ago). J. dullardi is one of the earliest known cousins of present-day baleen whales, a family that includes gigantic blue and humpback whales.

J. dullardi fossils

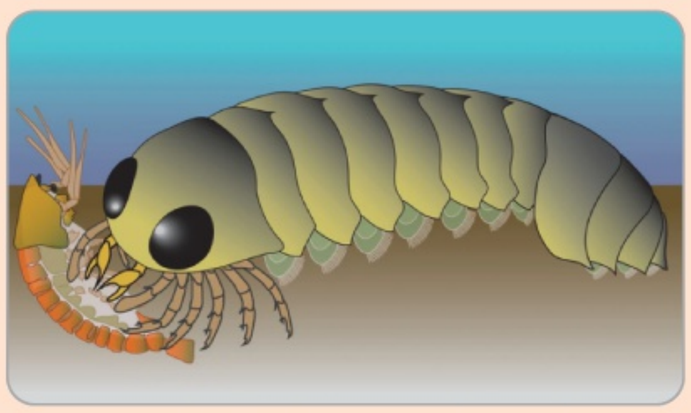
Though J. dullardi was related to baleen whales, it differed from its modern relatives in important ways. It was much smaller than they are, with a powerful, compact body that was built to chase down prey. And while J. dullardi had a mouthful of terrifying teeth, baleen whales do not have traditional teeth at all. Instead, they have plates in their mouths that work like a filter. When the animals suck in water, the plates trap food that the whales swallow whole.

The fossilized remains of J. dullardi, which included preserved teeth and inner-ear structures, belonged to a juvenile that measured about 7 feet long. "It's essentially a little whale with big eyes and a mouth full of sharp, slicing teeth," said Ruairidh Duncan, the study's lead author. "Imagine the shark-like version of a baleen whale—small and deceptively cute, but definitely not harmless."

J. dullardi was initially uncovered by Ross Dullard, an elementary school principal who spotted the fossils in 2019 while strolling the beach of Half Moon Bay. The remnants were visible at the base of a group of rocks that are part of a geological formation known as the Jan Juc Marl, which is between 24 million and 28 million years old. The fossils likely became visible after the rocks were worn down by waves. Dullard, who often searches for fossils in the area, took them home and later donated them to Museums Victoria.

Paleontologists said Dullard's discovery served as a good reminder that anyone can contribute to science. "World-changing fossils can be found in your own backyard," said Erich Fitzgerald, an author of the study.

Spiders from the sea



New research suggests that spiders and other arachnids (creatures with eight legs) may have originated in the sea. Researchers from the University of Arizona came to this conclusion after studying a 508-million-year-old fossil of Mollisonia symmetrica (shown above). This extinct species was previously thought to be an arthropod (animal with a hard outer shell but no backbone) and an ancestor of the horseshoe crab.

Scientists studied Mollisonia's brain and central nervous system, which sends messages around the body so it can move. Both were unlike modern horseshoe crabs but very similar to today's arachnids. In particular, its brain had an unusual "backward" arrangement, a feature that modern spiders also have and that allows them to move around in many ways. Mollisonia likely had similar abilities.

AI beats goalies at predicting penalty kicks

Artificial intelligence (AI) can predict the direction of soccer penalty kicks more accurately than human goalkeepers, according to new research. AI is a computer system that can learn from experience and perform tasks that usually require human intelligence.

Scientists in Spain analyzed more than 1,000 penalty kicks from televised matches and chose 640 high-quality video clips. The researchers then fed these clips to 22 different AI learning models. They asked the systems to predict whether the ball would go left, right, or down the middle, based on the kicker's movements in the video footage and whether they were right- or left-footed.

FUN FACT
A study found that soccer players score less often against goalies wearing red or yellow and more when goalies wear blue or green.

The best AI model predicted the direction correctly 52% of the time, while human goalkeepers got it right 46% of the time. When researchers simplified the task by removing the middle option, the AI's accuracy jumped to 64%—which was nearly 10% better than that of humans.

Lead researcher David Freire-Obregón said he was surprised by how much can be revealed about what a player intends before they've even kicked the ball. Scientists refer to this as "action anticipation." Although it would be difficult to use the technique during a real match, the researchers said it could help goalkeepers during training and possibly transform how they prepare for penalty shootouts.

Goalies have to keep an eye on the ball.

Virtual reality is an immersive experience.

Virtual reality can relieve pain

Although studies have shown that exposure to nature can relieve pain, getting outdoors isn't always possible for people with ongoing, long-term pain. Now researchers are studying whether nature scenes simulated by virtual reality (VR) devices could help instead.

To assess this, scientists exposed 29 participants to 2D images and 360-degree films of nature, recording their reactions and tracking their brain activity. The results suggested that when participants felt more immersed and present in the nature scene, they felt a greater pain-relieving effect. In fact, VR-simulated nature was nearly twice as effective as the 2D images and almost as effective as pain-relief medication.

The scientists believe the VR nature scenes work because they help change how the brain sends pain signals. They hope that immersive nature scenes could improve treatment for people with long-term pain, particularly patients in nursing homes and hospitals.

AMAZING INVENTION

Packaging that helps the planet

Meadow containers

Many household products, like shampoo, hand soap, and condiments, come in plastic packaging, but plastic waste isn't always properly recycled. A new packaging system could help with that problem because it replaces plastic containers with aluminum cans. About 81% of aluminum is recycled, compared to 52% of plastic.

Created by a UK company called Meadow, the aluminum containers fit into canisters with a pump, screw top, or spray nozzle. Empty containers are recycled and replaced, reducing waste and helping the planet.

GETTY IMAGES (2); MEODOW; ON LEFT PAGE: ARTWORK BY RUAIRIDH DUNCAN/MUSEUMS VICTORIA; TOM BREAKWELL/MU; NICK STRAUSFELD

Photos of the week

Seeing double
Yuka Takahashi took this image of two humpback whales in French Polynesia.

Blending in
This photo of a dwarf seahorse was shot by Richard Smith in the US.

ANDREY SHPATAK; RICHARD SMITH; KIM HYEON MIN; LÁSZLÓ FÖLDI; YUKA TAKAHASHI; SULIMAN ALATIQI

Photos of the week

Colorful crawler
This photo of a pea crab in Russia was taken by Andrey Shpatak.

New life
László Földi captured this close-up of a squid egg in the Philippines.

Swim school
Kim Hyeon Min took this picture of fish and coral in Indonesia.

Cooling off
Suliman Alatiqi shot this photo of a Komodo dragon in Indonesia.

Texas A&M players celebrate a win over Notre Dame.

DID YOU KNOW?
The football huddle was created by a deaf quarterback who didn't want his deaf opponents to see him using sign language.

Big game in the NFL

An NFL game on September 14 (above) was a rematch of last season's Super Bowl featuring the Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs. The Eagles, who won the Super Bowl, beat the Chiefs again, 20–17. They are off to a 2–0 start, while the Chiefs are still looking for a win.

Exciting week in college football

The 2025 college football season started last month and has been filled with thrilling games. This year, 136 teams—which is more than ever—are competing in the FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision), the highest-level division in the sport.

Ohio State University is the defending national champion, but the University of Texas began the season as the top-ranked FBS team. However, Ohio State beat Texas in Week 1 and became the number one team in the country. As of September 15, the other teams ranked in the top five were Penn State University, Louisiana State University (LSU), the University of Miami, and the University of Georgia. Heading into Week 4, Texas is ranked number eight.

Gunner Stockton

Several exciting games were played on September 13. In one, Georgia beat its conference rival, the University of Tennessee, 44–41. Tennessee had a 21–7 lead after the first quarter, but Georgia scored the next 20 points. By the end of the fourth quarter, they were tied, 38–38. In overtime, Tennessee scored a field goal on their first possession, then Georgia answered with a touchdown for the win. Georgia QB Gunner Stockton compiled 342 total yards and three touchdowns.

In another contest that came down to the final possession, 16th-ranked Texas A&M defeated eighth-ranked Notre Dame, 41–40. Notre Dame, the team that lost to Ohio State in last season's national championship game, took a 40–34 lead with less than three minutes to play in the final quarter. Texas A&M responded with a 13-play drive, scoring the game-winning touchdown on fourth down with 13 seconds remaining. Texas A&M wide receiver Mario Craver was outstanding in the win, catching seven passes for 207 yards and a touchdown.

One team off to an unexpectedly great start is Vanderbilt University. On September 13, they faced 11th-ranked University of South Carolina, a team they had not beaten since 2008, and won in a major upset, 31–7. For the first time since 2017, Vanderbilt has a 3–0 start to the season. The win bumped them up to number 20 in the rankings.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

On September 13, the Milwaukee Brewers became the first team to clinch a spot in the MLB playoffs. They locked it in as a result of a New York Mets loss, but the Brewers also beat the St. Louis Cardinals that day, 9–8, in extra innings. On September 15, the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Los Angeles Dodgers, 6–5, in extra innings and earned the National League East title for the second year in a row.

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden

TRACK AND FIELD

US sprinter Melissa Jefferson-Wooden won gold in the women's 100-meter race at the World Athletics Championships on September 14. Her time, 10.61 seconds, was the fourth-fastest in the event's history.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

On September 13, Charlotte FC beat Inter Miami, 3–0, for their ninth straight win, tying a record for the longest winning streak in MLS history. Idan Toklomati scored all three goals.

RULE CHANGE
For the first time in WNBA history, the championship final will be a best-of-seven-games series.

The Liberty vs. the Mercury on September 14

WNBA playoffs are underway

On September 14, the 2025 WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) playoffs began. Eight teams are battling for the title. The defending champions, the New York Liberty, are seeded (ranked) fifth in the postseason. The number one seed is the Minnesota Lynx, who finished the regular season with the best record (34–10). The number two seed is the Las Vegas Aces, who won the title in 2022 and 2023 and ended the regular season with 16 straight wins.

The other teams competing are the third-seeded Atlanta Dream, fourth-seeded Phoenix Mercury, sixth-seeded Indiana Fever, seventh-seeded Seattle Storm, and eighth-seeded Golden State Valkyries. The Valkyries are the first WNBA expansion team to qualify for the playoffs in their inaugural season.

On the opening day of the first round, the Lynx, who lost to the Liberty in last season's finals, continued their impressive play and defeated the Valkyries, 101–72. Lynx star forward Napheesa Collier scored 20 points in the game.

In other games that day, the Dream beat the Fever, 80–68, despite 27 points from Fever guard Kelsey Mitchell, while the Liberty picked up a key victory over the Mercury, winning in overtime, 76–69. Liberty forward Breanna Stewart tied the game at 65–65 in the final minutes, and New York allowed only four points in the extra period.

In the final Game 1 of the first round, the Aces continued their winning streak with a 102–77 victory over the Storm. Las Vegas forward and reigning WNBA Most Valuable Player A'ja Wilson compiled 29 points and eight rebounds.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **AJ Mason**

Team: **Junior Rams (flag football)**

"Coach AJ is the best. I joined football to be with my friends and make new ones. I knew nothing about the game, and he taught me everything. He told me what routes are, and he explained what quarterbacks and running backs are and what they do. He taught me tips and tricks on how to throw farther and helped me to be a better rusher. He's nice and he's chill. He's not my coach anymore, but he was a part of my heart and I miss him a lot." Renzo, 9, California

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Rachel Rybicki

AGE: 21 SPORT: GYMNASTICS
TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Early days I started gymnastics when I was age 4 or 5. I was flipping around the house, and it was safer in a gym with mats. My mom was a gymnastics coach, which was an awesome bonus. In middle school, I started watching college competitions. When I saw the joy and fun the gymnasts were having while also competing at a very high level, I knew it was something I wanted to do too.

Training time During the pre-season, we typically have four-hour practices, four days during the week, plus Saturdays. Those are a bit shorter, and we'll also lift weights.

Pre-meet plan First, I run around a bit, then I walk around and visualize myself on the equipment.

Keeping calm When I compete, I constantly talk to myself so my mind doesn't wander into what-ifs and negative thoughts. I might say, "I got this," or "You can do this." Or it could be more corrective, like, "Push through your legs." If something goes wrong, afterward I remind myself that dwelling on it isn't going to change what happened. I can only learn from it and use that to improve.

Proud moment Our last season wasn't ideal—we were losing and not executing the way we'd practiced. It was hard to keep showing up in the gym. Everyone gave up on us, but we didn't give up on ourselves and we qualified for nationals.

Her advice Lean into your work ethic and make it non-negotiable. Working hard will take you far. But also realize that you're not going to be perfect all the time, so give yourself grace.

GETTY IMAGES; UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA ATHLETICS (2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4)

CREATIVE TINTING
In ancient times, people made colors by using ingredients such as black charcoal and turmeric, a yellow-orange spice.

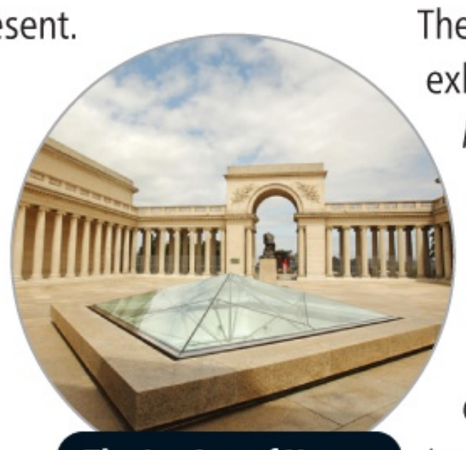
Forever (for Old Lady Sally) by Loretta Bennett

Exhibition of colorful artwork

A museum in San Francisco is showcasing different printmaking techniques from across centuries.

In California, an exhibition at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's Legion of Honor is highlighting one of the oldest art techniques: printmaking. *Printing Color: Chiaroscuro to Screenprint* features pieces that showcase art from the 15th century to the present.

Printmaking was invented in China in the 9th century and became prominent in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. It is an art form that involves transferring images from one surface—such as a carved block or screen—onto another, like paper. Natalia Lauricella, the exhibition's curator (person who selects art), told *The Week Junior* she chose a variety of prints and styles as a way to give visitors "a sense of the technologies and the kind of evolving and changing methods."



The Legion of Honor

The oldest work in the *Printing Color* exhibition is a woodcut from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, a famous book from 1493 that illustrates world history. It was printed in black ink, but the print on display was then hand-colored. "Add a wash of blue or green and you create more depth to the image," Lauricella said.

Among the other prints in the show are a lithograph (printing process that uses oil and water to create images) made by French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in the 1800s and a screenprint by the famous American pop artist Andy Warhol in 1971. The contemporary works include an etching by American artist Loretta Bennett (pictured above), who makes prints based on her own colorful quilt designs.

Digital prints are common today, but Lauricella said that the exhibition shows how artists have kept traditional printmaking alive. "Even though new technologies get developed, older processes endure," she said.

3 printmaking techniques

Woodcutting
This is the oldest printmaking method. First, a design is carved into a wooden block, then the raised areas are coated in ink. The block is then pressed onto paper or another surface, transferring the design.

Engraving
To create an engraved work, artists use a sharp tool called a burin to carve lines into a metal plate, usually made of copper or zinc. Ink fills the grooves, the surface is wiped clean, and damp paper is pressed on top to transfer the image.

Screenprinting
In this method, also called silkscreening, ink or paint is pushed through a mesh screen onto a surface underneath it. Stencils are used to block out areas and create a design. The technique produces bold, graphic results.

FAMOUS FLYER

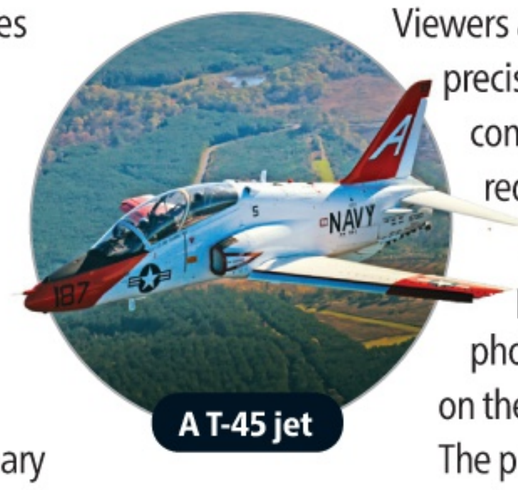
The world's first official military aircraft was the Wright Military Flyer, which the US Army purchased in 1909.

Top Guns: The Next Generation

TV series follows top fighter pilots

National Geographic is giving viewers an up-close look at what it takes to be an elite fighter pilot. The new series *Top Guns: The Next Generation* follows a group of Navy and Marine Corps pilots as they perfect and test their skills in hopes of earning the Wings of Gold, a symbol of excellence. The six-episode series airs on NatGeo and streams on Disney+ and Hulu.

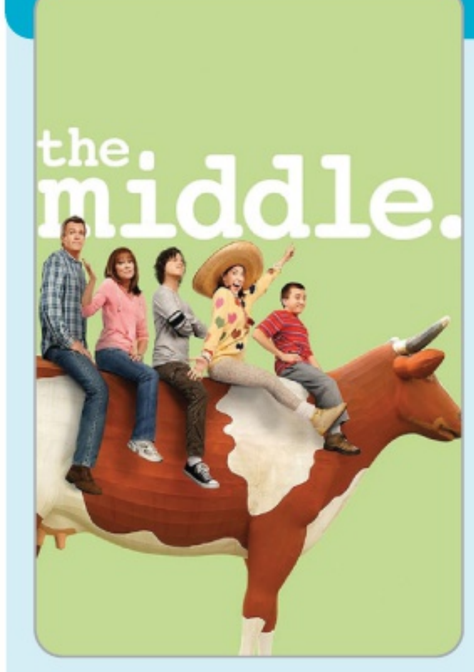
The pilots in the show are members of the advanced fighter training program at Naval Air Station Meridian in Mississippi. Each year, 150 pilots are accepted into it. "They are already extraordinary when it starts," executive producer Tanya Shaw told *The Week Junior*. "So we're watching the most extraordinary student pilots become the most *most* extraordinary, if that's even possible." The producers spent six years discussing the show with the Navy and were eventually granted unprecedented access to the program to make the series. "We're really privileged that they allowed us to film it and work with them so that we can see just how tough it is to qualify," Shaw said.



A T-45 jet

The series follows the pilots over six months. Viewers are able to see them practice precision bombing, close-range aerial combat, and the tricky landings required for aircraft carriers. For scenes filmed in mid-air, the producers collaborated with a photography company that worked on the hit 2022 film *Top Gun: Maverick*. The pilots' thrilling work requires mental and physical strength, plus resilience. "Some of the things that you see are really good lessons in not giving up," Shaw said. She added, "Taking some of their attitudes into our own lives would probably make us better at what we do."

READER RECOMMENDS

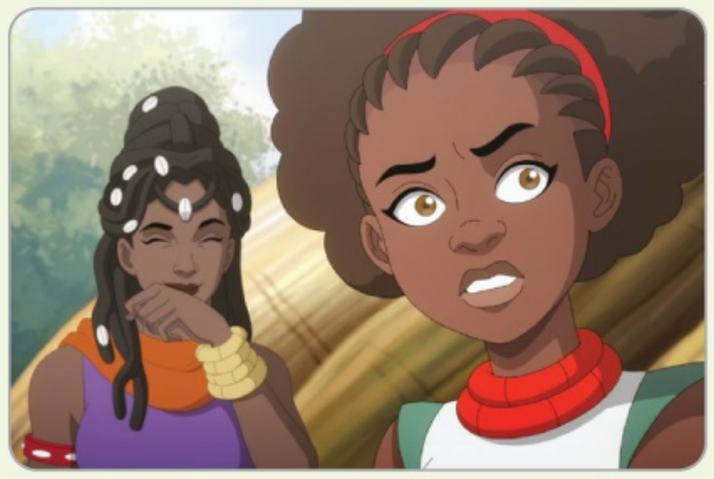


The Middle *(Prime Video, Peacock, and other platforms)*

"This comedy series follows the daily life of the Hecks, a middle-class family living in the small town of Orson, Indiana. The story centers on Frankie Heck, a mom juggling work, family, and the chaos of life with her husband and their three quirky children. Each family member brings their own challenges and laughs, and the show highlights the struggles and humor of everyday life. Through ups and downs, the Hecks stick together, showcasing the love and resilience of a perfectly imperfect family." Aarush, 11, Illinois

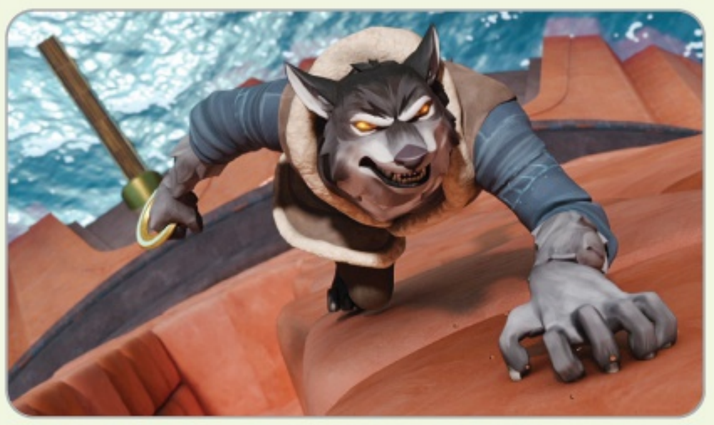
Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST



Iyanu: The Age of Wonders
(HBO Max)

Iyanu is a series about a brave girl that is based on popular Nigerian graphic novels. This new animated film is set before the period in the show. It explores the ancient origins of Yorubaland and follows Iyanu's warrior parents as they fight an epic battle.



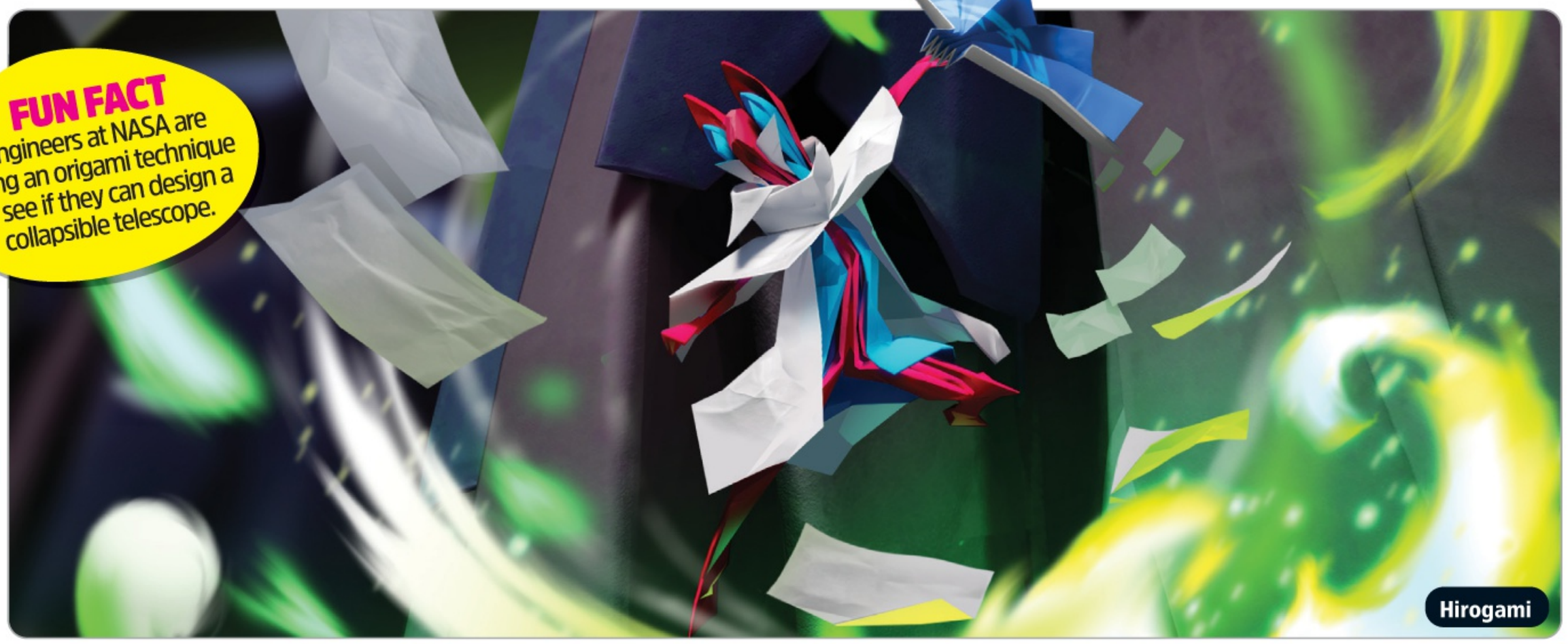
Wolf King
(Netflix)

Inspired by Curtis Jobling's *Wereworld* books, this fantasy series focuses on a young werewolf, Drew, who is the king of a world where nobles shape-shift into animal hybrids. In the new second season, he is under pressure to choose a queen and unite his kingdom as war looms.

Vampirina: Teenage Vampire
(Disney Channel)

The young vampire from the popular picture books and animated series is a teen in this new live-action series. While attending a performing arts boarding school, Vee navigates life among humans and has to deal with the ghost her overprotective dad sent to watch over her.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (2); WARNER BROS.; LION FORGE ENTERTAINMENT; COURTESY OF NETFLIX; DISNEY/MITCH HAASETH; ON LEFT PAGE: LORETTA PETTWAY BENNETT AND ESTATE OF LUELLA PETTWAY/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK; ALAMY (2); GETTY IMAGES (2)



Hirogami

Game mixes action and origami

Hirogami is a new action platform game that was partly inspired by origami, the Japanese art of folding paper into different shapes, objects, and animals. It was recently released for the PlayStation 5 and PC.

The main character in the game is Hiro, who is from Shishiki Village, a hideaway in a world made of origami-style trees, mountains, and buildings. The world is beautiful yet very delicate, and Hiro soon discovers that digital entities called The Blight are taking over and ruining everything. He then sets off on an adventure to save his village and the world. Although the game is action-packed, its frame rate (the speed of images that make up a video or animation) has been slowed to give it the feel of a stop-motion video.

Hiro has a magical paper fan that allows him to float in the air and blow away enemies. He is a paper-folding master and can use those skills to transform into creatures such as a rolling armadillo, a tree-hopping frog, and a powerful ape. Hiro can also transform into a flat piece of paper and a paper airplane, enabling him to maneuver through locations. As you play, you can collect items that unlock story secrets or new abilities.

Hirogami's creators told GameRant that The Blight represents things that are cold and impersonal, while paper represents imperfection and creativity. Game designer Yi Han Yong said the team hopes people who play it will "feel joy, wonder...maybe even a little peace, like unfolding a delicate note that's been waiting just for them."

PODCAST OF THE WEEK

GOOD NIGHT STORIES FOR REBEL GIRLS

Major podcast platforms, Rebel Girls app

This show features the life stories of extraordinary real women, told in the style of fairy tales. Subjects include sci-fi author Octavia Butler and Latin music star Shakira. To access more than 350 stories and immersive activities, check out the Rebel Girls app.

GAME OF THE WEEK

VIVIDLOPE

Nintendo Switch

Camden, a 14-year-old reader of *The Week Junior*, recommended this part-puzzle, part-arcade game. It is set in an upside-down, gravity-free world where you battle enemies from all directions, escaping rotating platforms and collecting powerful items as you play.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK

CAN YOU SWIM IN JELLO?

tinyurl.com/TWJUS-JelloPool

Engineer Mark Rober set out to achieve his childhood dream of swimming in a pool of Jell-O. However, before anyone is able to jump in, he and his team have to figure out how to heat enough water to dissolve the gelatin, get the mixture into a pool, and chill it to jiggly perfection.

BANDAI NAMCO (2); REBEL GIRLS; JAKLUB; MARK ROBER VIA YOUTUBE

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Pocket Bear

By Katherine Applegate, illustrated by Charles Santoso

(Feiwel & Friends)

When a cat named Zephyrina pulls a spaghetti-stained teddy bear out of a restaurant dumpster, she doesn't realize how valuable it is. Zephyrina frequently brings stuffed animals and other discarded toys to her owners, a mother and daughter, who clean them and find them new homes. After the humans go to bed, the playthings come to life in a way that might remind you of the movie *Toy Story*. The toys' leader is Pocket Bear, one of the miniature plush bears that were made for soldiers to keep in their pockets during World War I (1914–1918). Pocket Bear has a hunch that the bear Zephyrina rescued may have been part of the first shipment of teddy bears Germany sent to America in 1903. If so, the bear, whom they named Berwon, may be worth a fortune. Pocket Bear and Zephyrina are worried that Berwon will be sold to a toy collector who comes to the apartment to look for valuable items. But then the collector sets out to steal Berwon! Can they save him? This heartwarming story, told from Zephyrina's point of view, is written in short chapters and includes exquisite black-and-white drawings.

ASK THE AUTHOR

Katherine Applegate

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

What inspired this story?
I was visiting Selfridges, a UK store, and came across a section where you can buy pre-loved stuffed animals. I found that so charming. It made me want to write about stuffed bears.

Did pocket bears exist?
Yes! They were made for British soldiers to carry in their pockets during World War I (1914–1918). The bears were just 3.5 inches tall.

Did you have a stuffy when you were young?
I had a little pink blanket called blankie.

Describe Zephyrina and Pocket Bear's relationship.
They have an enduring and sweet friendship. Pocket understands her, and she is protective of him.

If you weren't a writer, what would you be?
A veterinarian, because I love animals. I had dogs, cats, and many gerbils growing up.

READER RECOMMENDS

Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard: The Sword of Summer *By Rick Riordan*

"This is the first book in a series about a boy named Magnus. He learns that he is the son of a Norse god and sacrifices himself to save others. After he becomes part of an eternal army, he embarks on a quest to find the Sword of Summer. I love this series so much. I almost cried when I finished the final book." GiannaLei, 9, California

Do you have a book to recommend? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

4 new books that take place at school

These page-turners feature field trips, friendship trouble, and more.

Penny Draws a Class Trip

By Sara Shepard

(G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers)

In this illustrated book, the fourth in a series, Penny's class is heading to New York City on a field trip. She wants to have fun exploring, but she's anxious about traveling. Will Penny be able to overcome her fears? *Ages 8–12*

School Dance

By Sarah Sax

(Knopf Books for Young Readers)

Milo is nervous about going to the middle school dance. Whenever he dances, something goes wrong. He once knocked over a wedding cake! With the help of friends and his grandmother, a legendary dancer, he tries to break his bad luck streak. This graphic novel is the third book in the Brinkley Yearbooks series. *Ages 8–12*

Schooled

By Jamie Sumner

(Atheneum Books for Young Readers)

Lenny's life has been turned upside down since his mom passed away. He's starting sixth grade in a new experimental school on a college campus. He even lives in student housing! Although the classes aren't what he expects, they may be exactly what he needs. *Ages 10 and up*

Zed Moonstein Makes a Friend

By Lance Rubin

(Clarion Books)

When Zed's only friend in sixth grade doesn't have time to hang out with him anymore, he feels lonely. He downloads an app called MonoFriend and starts chatting with Matt, an AI bot. In the beginning, Zed feels like he's made a true connection, but first impressions can be deceiving. *Ages 8–12*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: COURTESY OF KATHERINE APPLEGATE; GETTY IMAGES

Engage your senses on a hike

Get outside and tap into the wonders of nature during the fall season.

Research shows that spending time in nature can decrease stress, boost health and happiness, and help you pay better attention in school. One way to experience nature is to go for a hike. With your family's help, plan an outing together and gather the essentials, such as a map, the right footwear, and water. While you're walking, try to actively engage your senses to absorb what's happening around you. Here's how.

Admire your surroundings

On a hike, you'll naturally use your sense of sight to navigate the terrain and follow blazes (trail markers) to stay on your path. You can also take a moment to look up to observe cloud movements and the way sunlight filters through the treetops. Pause to appreciate fall foliage—the vibrant reds, golds, and oranges of autumn leaves.

Stop to smell the flowers.

Listen to sounds

Leave the headphones at home and listen to the sounds of nature, like a rushing waterfall, birds singing, and leaves rustling. Think about how these sounds might reflect the current season or the part of the country you live in.

Feel the wind

Try to notice how the breeze blows against your skin and whether you feel a difference when you're on flat terrain compared with standing on a hill. Tuning in to these details can help you pay closer attention to the shape of the landscape you're hiking. Also feel the texture of natural objects around you, like stones that have been made smooth by a babbling brook.

Inhale deeply

Take in the aromas of your natural surroundings, whether it's the pine scent of evergreen trees, the sweet smell of wildflowers, or the fresh grassiness of a meadow after a rainfall. You might also pick up the scents of nearby animals, like a musky fox or the smelly warning signal of a skunk.

Take a taste home

When your hike is over, you and your family might want to see whether there are any local farmers markets or shops in the area. You may want to look for locally sourced foods like maple syrup, jam, or honey so you can enjoy some of the tastes of nature long after you kick off your hiking shoes!

Inclusive trails

Many parks in the US are adding or modifying trails so they can be enjoyed by more people. Here are a few examples.

Accessible trails Whether paved paths or wide boardwalks, these passageways are designed for wheelchair users and people with other mobility devices.

Braille trails Designed for people with visual impairments, Braille trails may have tactile signs or talking kiosks, as well as ropes to offer physical support.

Cultural trails These routes connect visitors with a local community's history and heritage through displays, art installations, and other elements.

WORD ORIGIN

The word "broccoli," from the Italian word *broccolo*, refers to "the flowering top of a cabbage."

WARNING! Ask an adult's permission before using the stove.

Whip up a warm and toasty broccoli cheese melt

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ head broccoli, finely chopped into very small florets (about 2 cups)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- ¼ cup grated Manchego cheese
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- 6 slices provolone cheese

Instructions

1. Warm the olive oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat and add the broccoli. Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring often, until the broccoli is bright green and starting to soften, about 3 minutes. Remove broccoli from heat and stir in the Parmesan and Manchego cheeses.
2. Spread mayonnaise on one side of each of the 4 slices of bread. Arrange 2 slices in a large skillet, with the mayonnaise side down. Layer the bread with half of the provolone, tearing the cheese slices to fit on the bread.
3. Divide the broccoli-cheese mixture between the 2 pieces of bread, then layer the remaining provolone on top. Top the sandwiches with the remaining bread slices, mayonnaise side up.
4. Set the skillet over low heat and cook slowly until the bread is golden on the bottom, 3 to 5 minutes. Carefully flip the sandwiches and cook until the other side is golden brown and the cheese is melted, about 3 minutes more.
5. Slice the sandwiches in half and serve them immediately. Makes 2 sandwiches.

ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

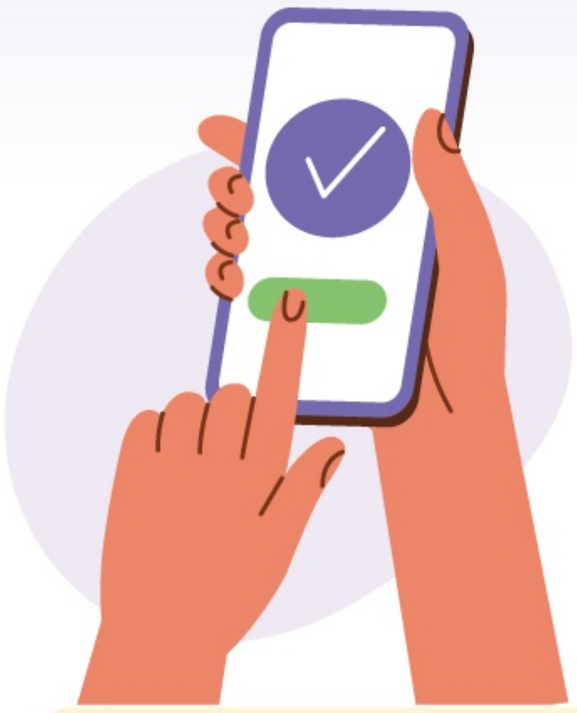
LIFE HACK PRACTICE GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

An important part of participating in competitive activities is being a good sport. One way to achieve that is by playing fair. Competitions have rules so they can be done in an organized way, and everyone needs to follow them. It's also important to cheer on others. Events are most successful when everyone feels supported. If you get taken out of a game, try not to get upset. Instead, channel your feelings into motivation to practice harder. Finally, accept the outcome no matter what happens. If you win, you deserve to celebrate! But don't go overboard in front of opponents. If you lose, avoid getting angry or making excuses. Congratulate the winners on a job well done.

Shake hands after a game.

Word ladder

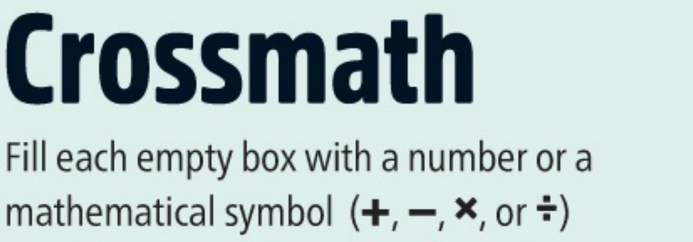
To change the word PASS into the word WORD, use each clue to fill in a word that is only one letter different from the word before it. If you get stuck, try solving from the bottom up.



	P A S S
Time gone by ▶	
Protection for a broken arm or leg ▶	
Supermarket alternative to a basket ▶	
Parking lot sights ▶	
Star ___ (famous movie series) ▶	
Like a sunny day in spring ▶	
Good thing to find in garden soil ▶	
	W O R D

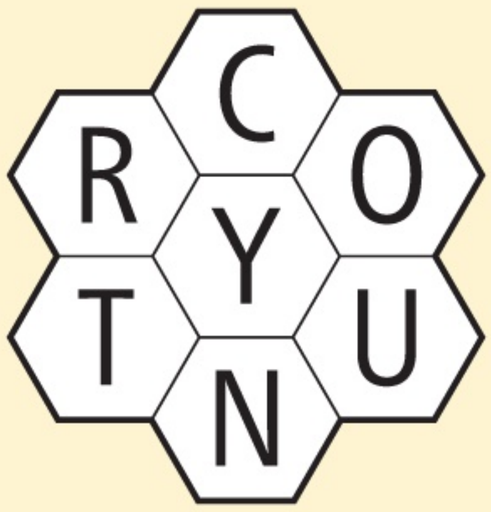
DETOURS

Draw one continuous path from START to END that goes through every single square without crossing itself. For squares with signs, you may only enter at the arrow's base, and you may only make a turn in the direction of an arrow shown. (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)



STEPPING STONES

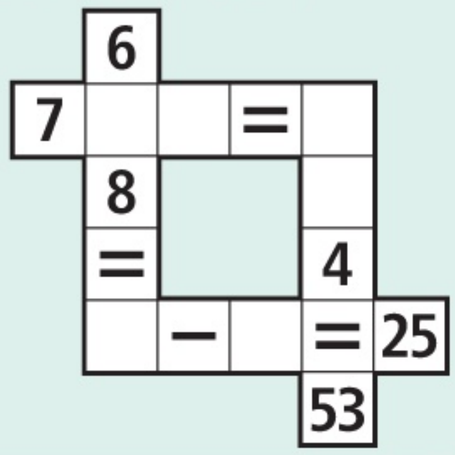
Each figure hides a seven-letter thing on a globe. To find each one, start anywhere and move in an unbroken path through letters that share a border (no jumping!), using each letter once.



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

Crossmath

Fill each empty box with a number or a mathematical symbol (+, −, ×, or ÷) to complete the equations across and down. A symbol can be used more than once.



Spot the difference

These two pictures of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home, appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

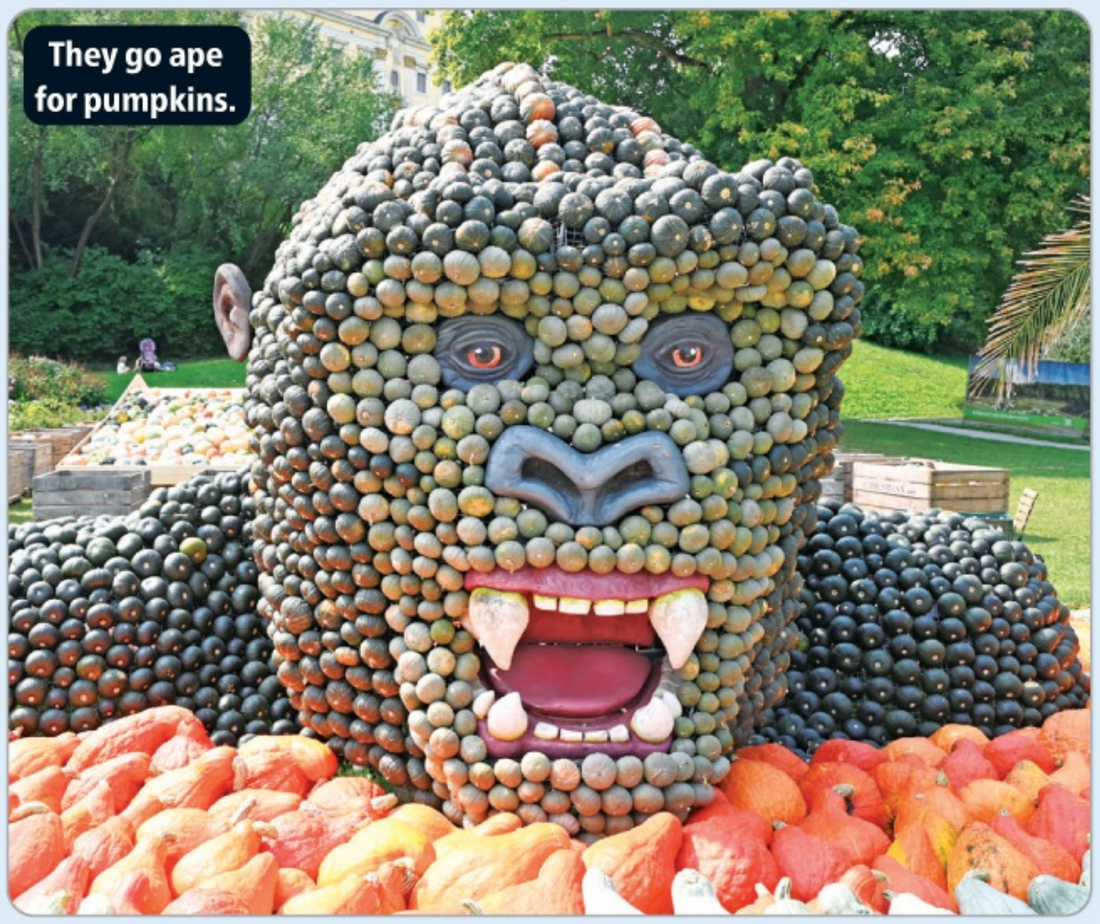
Detours hint: Start by moving straight across the top row of boxes.

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

That's unbelievable!

Pairing sweet music with dessert

A composer claims to have found a way to make chocolate even tastier—with music. Natalie Hyacinth researched how music can affect people's senses while they eat. She found that sharper sounds strengthen sour and bitter flavors while smooth melodies make foods taste sweeter. In fact, she wrote a song called "Sweetest Melody," featuring piano, harp, and other string instruments to produce flowing music that highlights creaminess. She said enjoying chocolate can be a "multisensory experience."



Pumpkin fest pumps up fall spirit

As the fall season begins, the world's largest pumpkin festival has opened in Ludwigsburg, Germany. Visitors can check out pumpkin-based foods, art sculptures made with pumpkins, and a canoeing competition featuring giant hollowed-out pumpkins as boats. Each year, about 450,000 pumpkins are used. At the end of the celebration on November 2, giant pumpkins are cut open and their seeds are collected to grow next year's crops.

Becoming the king of Crocs

A Connecticut man has earned a world record title after collecting thousands of Crocs shoes. As a teenager, Doogie Sandtiger's goal was to obtain 366 pairs—one for each day of the year, including leap years. "You don't want to get to February 29 and not have a pair to wear," he explained. Now he has left that goal in the dust, owning more than 3,800 pairs of Crocs and earning the nickname "Croc King." Sandtiger hopes to eventually open his own museum, which he would call a "CrocsZeum."

Real or fake?

A menu for water enthusiasts

La Popote restaurant in Cheshire, England, has created the UK's first menu of bottled waters. Head chef Joseph Rawlins brought in water expert Doran Binder to design the menu, which features seven bottled waters from across Europe. Prices range from about $6 to $26 per bottle. The menu includes notes describing each water, such as "Mouthfeel: smooth, creamy, silky" and "Taste: clean, crisp, sharp." Is this story as true and pure as a mountain spring, or should you pour it down the sink?*

*Real! Joseph Rawlins said he and Doran Binder first had the idea for a water menu three years ago. He said, "Everything has been positive, it is a bit of fun, and we are looking forward to seeing where it goes."

WILL IRELAND/PINPEP; GETTY IMAGES; LUDWIGSBURG PUMPKIN FESTIVAL; COURTESY OF DOOGIE SANDTIGER; WILLIAM LAILEY VIA SWNS; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Your turn

Editor's note

One of our editorial team's favorite weeks of the year is set to begin! From September 23–30, the 12th annual Fat Bear Week will take place in Katmai National Park in Alaska (p5). To celebrate the park's brown bears as they put on weight before hibernation, rangers choose 12 impressive animals, organize them into tournament-style brackets, and invite the public to vote for the biggest and bulkiest among them. At the end of the week, one bear is crowned the champion. As the event unfolds, people can watch a livestream that shows the bears wading through the Brooks River and feeding on salmon in an effort to gain as much as 500 pounds. The animal lovers on our staff (which is to say all of us!) will be watching the competition, and we will report on the winner of Fat Bear Week—and the Fat Bear Junior contest that takes place on September 18 and 19—in an upcoming issue.

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Pilots to the Rescue Inc.

This organization transports abandoned dogs and cats to regions in the US where the animals have a better chance of being adopted. The group collaborates with rescue centers to identify shelters that have space for the animals, and volunteer pilots fly the animals there. So far in 2025, pilots have traveled more than 90,000 miles and relocated 1,537 animals. Find out more at pilotstotherescue.org.

Raising funds for flood victims

Ruthie, 10, Colorado

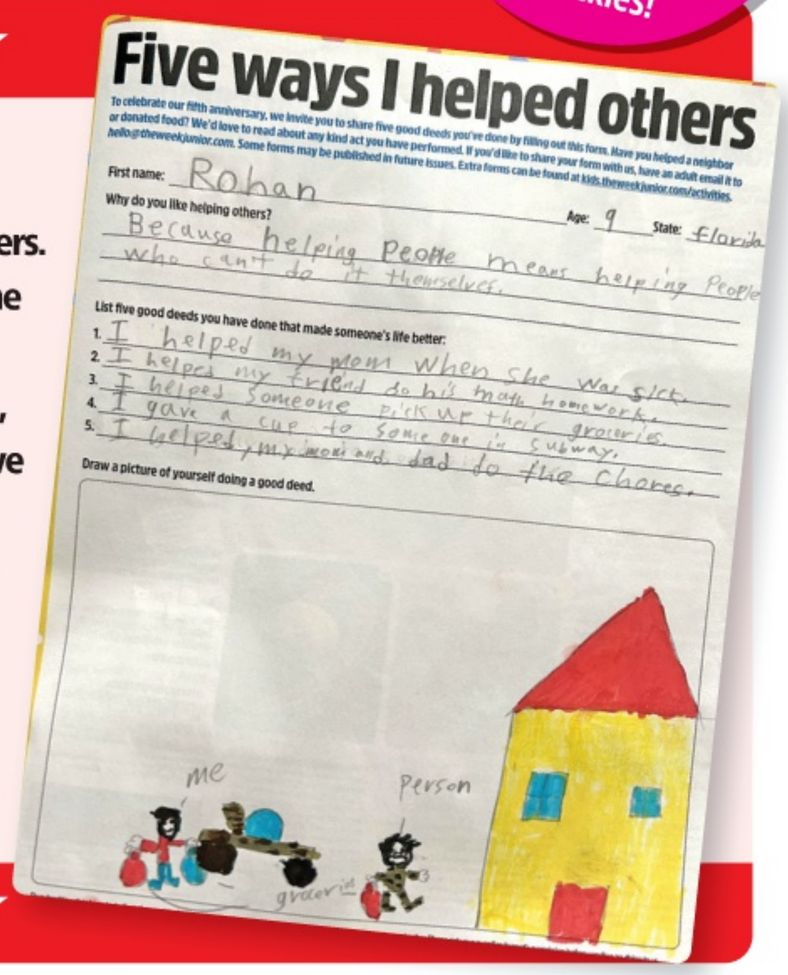
"This summer, I held a lemonade stand with my siblings and cousin on our street corner. We also sold iced coffee to the adults. I decided that I wanted to donate the money we raised to help with Texas flood relief efforts. My siblings and cousin donated as well, and we ended up giving $95 to a local nonprofit organization. I love helping other people!"

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

JOKE OF THE WEEK
How does an octopus make his friend laugh?
With ten-tickles!

Your five good deeds

Rohan, a 9-year-old from Florida, enjoys helping others. His good deeds include assisting his mother when she was sick and helping a friend with homework. To celebrate *The Week Junior*'s fifth anniversary in 2025, we're asking readers to share five good deeds they've done. Have you helped a neighbor or performed a kind act? Go to kids.theweekjunior.com/activities to download a form like the one shown at right. Fill it out, then have an adult email it to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*. We'll feature some of the submissions on this page in future issues.



Five ways I helped others

To celebrate our fifth anniversary, we invite you to share five good deeds you've done by filling out this form. Have you helped a neighbor or donated food? We'd love to read about any kind act you have performed. If you'd like to share your form with us, have an adult email it to hello@theweekjunior.com. Some forms may be published in future issues. Extra forms can be found at kids.theweekjunior.com/activities.

First name: Rohan Age: 9 State: Florida

Why do you like helping others?
Because helping people means helping people who can't do it themselves.

List five good deeds you have done that made someone's life better:
1. I helped my mom when she was sick.
2. I helped my friend do his math homework.
3. I helped someone pick up their groceries.
4. I gave a cue to some one in subway.
5. I helped my mom and dad do the chores.

Draw a picture of yourself doing a good deed.

me Person

Your turn

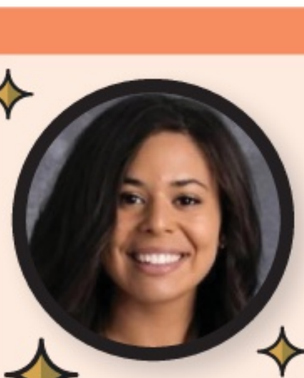
YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

"I made the mango icy from *The Week Junior*, but instead of mango, I used peaches. It was really good!" Hiren, 7, Virginia

"After reading about how bees pollinate in *The Week Junior*, I started watching my sunflower every day. I saw a bee on it!"
Natalie, 8, North Carolina

"I'm Chinese, and I can't believe the movie *Ne Zha* was in *The Week Junior*! I liked how you described it. Thank you for introducing it to people!" Shawn, 10, California



Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Mrs. Crappell**

School: **Hawk Elementary**

"Mrs. Crappell is funny and smart, and she makes learning so much fun! When second grade began, I didn't really like math. It was a difficult class for me, but Mrs. Crappell created math games that helped us learn in a fun way. When the school year finished, math and science were my favorite subjects thanks to Mrs. Crappell."

Madison, 8, Texas

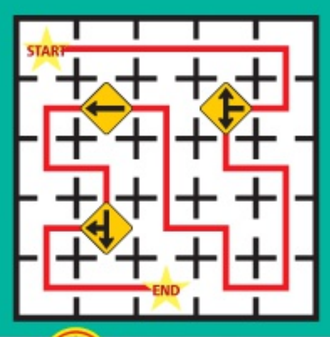
Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: COURTESY PILOTS TO THE RESCUE

Puzzle answers (from page 26)

Word ladder
PASS
PAST
CAST
CART
CARS
WARS
WARM
WORM
WORD

Stepping stones
country, capital



	6			
7	×	7	=	49
8				+
=				4
48	−	23	=	25
				53

Quiz answers (from page 30)
1 c) Germany **2** Wings of Gold **3** b) Mosquitoes **4** True **5** b) 1493 **6** a) Hawaii **7** *Big Money* **8** True **9** False. Zephyrina is a cat. **10** Perseverance **11** b) Minnesota Lynx **12** b) *Faust* **13** False. It was smaller. **14** The Blight **15** c) 2014

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

Quiz

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 The world's largest pumpkin festival is held every fall in what country?

a) Austria b) Belgium c) Germany

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 In the series *Top Guns: The Next Generation*, what is the symbol of excellence that pilots are trying to earn?

3 Scientists are dropping what type of insect on two Hawaiian islands to save honeycreeper birds?

a) Beetles b) Mosquitoes c) Wasps

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4 True or false? Artificial intelligence is better than humans at predicting which direction soccer penalty kicks will go.

True ☐ False ☐

5 The oldest work in the *Printing Color: Chiaroscuro to Screenprint* art exhibition is from what year?

a) 943 b) 1493 c) 1893

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

6 Which US state did the personal finance company WalletHub rank as the happiest?

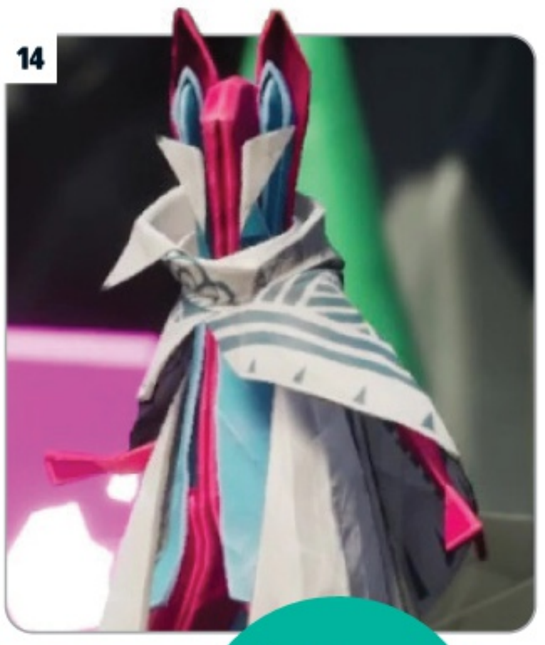
a) Hawaii b) Maryland c) Nebraska

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

7 What is the title of musician and composer Jon Batiste's latest album?

8 True or false? Researchers in Brazil used mats to safely collect fur samples from wild jaguars.

True ☐ False ☐



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

9 True or false? In the book *Pocket Bear*, Zephyrina is a dog that collects discarded stuffed animals and other toys.

True ☐ False ☐

10 What is the name of the NASA rover that may have discovered signs of ancient life on the planet Mars?

11 Which women's basketball team has the top seed in this year's WNBA playoffs?

a) Las Vegas Aces

b) Minnesota Lynx

c) New York Liberty

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 Which opera was performed at the opening of New York City's Metropolitan Opera in 1883?

a) *Aida*

b) *Faust*

c) *The Magic Flute*

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 True or false? The prehistoric whale Janjucetus dullardi was larger than modern-day baleen whales.

True ☐ False ☐

14 In the video game Hirogami, what are the digital entities called that are taking over and ruining everything?

15 In what year did Katmai National Park hold its first Fat Bear contest?

a) 2004 b) 2008 c) 2014

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

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The Week Junior (ISSN 2689-9027) is published weekly, except January 3, January 10, July 11, and September 12. *The Week Junior* is published by Future US LLC, 130 West 42nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTERS: Send change of address to *The Week Junior,* PO Box 37595, Boone, IA 50037-7595.

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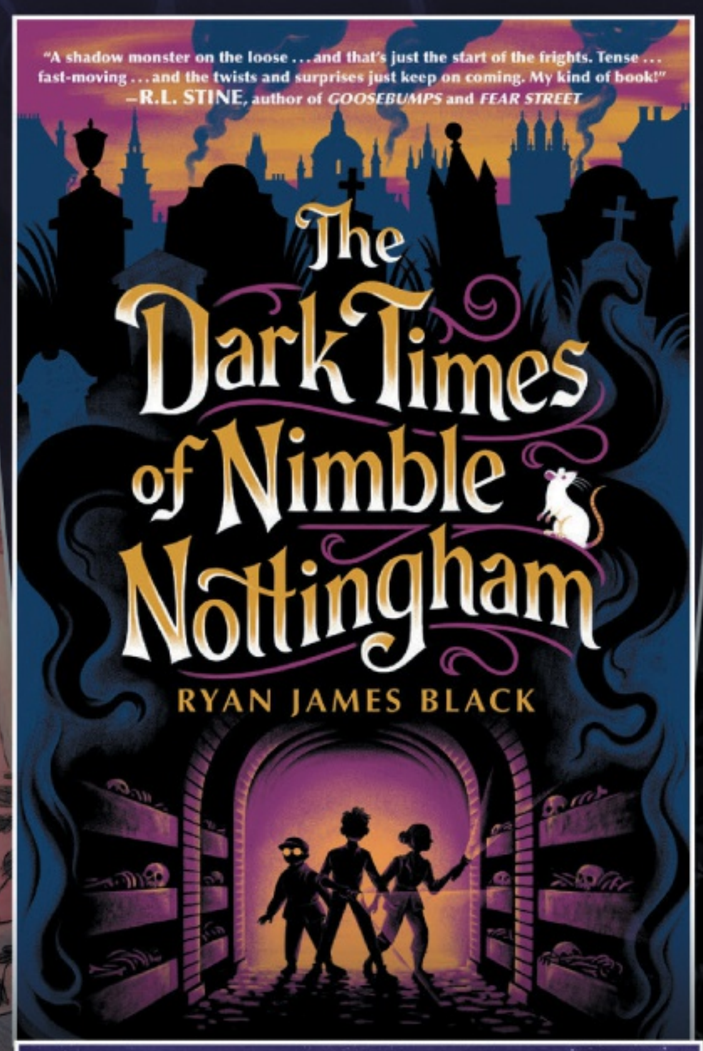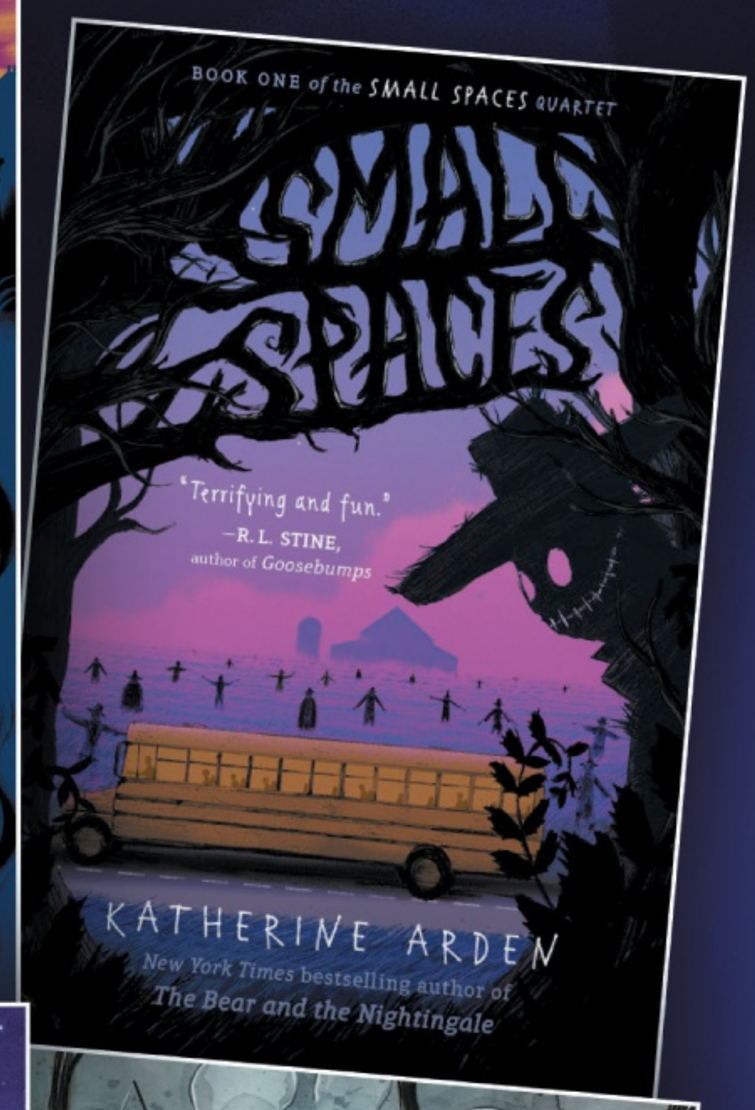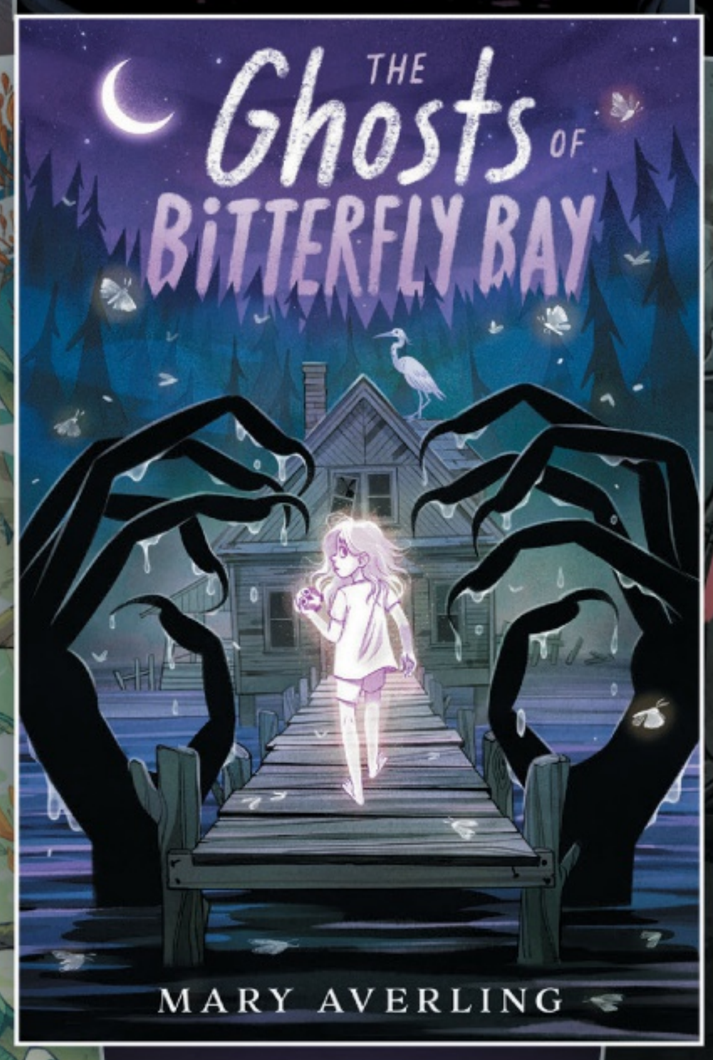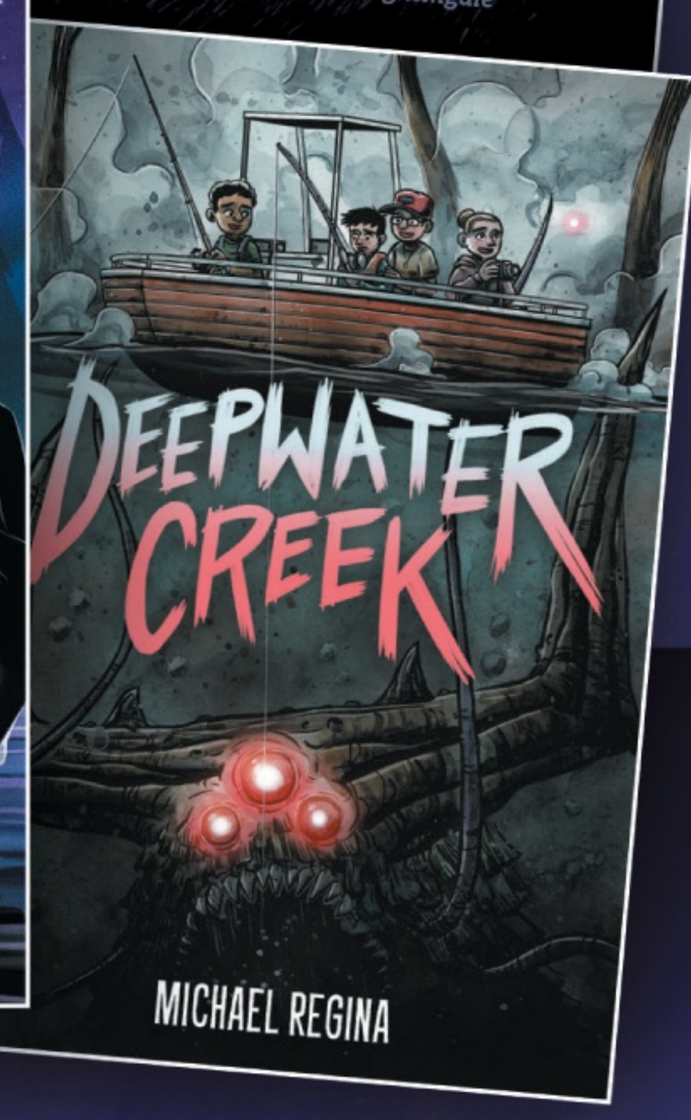
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